

The Pun



...for punters

Quantock: Inspiring Sedition

Rod Quantock

talks to Chloe Walker

QUESTION: what if Australia's pre-eminent political comedian, described by *The Age* as 'a living Melbourne treasure', were charged as a terrorist? It could happen. Last week Rod Quantock hosted *The Inaugural Golden Guy Fawkes Award*, in which local and international comedians competed for the 'Comedian Most

Likely to Blow-Up Parliament' Award. Rod was expecting some very special visitors to the event, held at The Old Melbourne Gaol.

'I sent invitations to ASIO and the Chief of Police,' he says. But how would we know if they were in the audience? 'They're very subtle and undercover people, but I'm sure they were there. One night you'll go to see Greg Fleet's show and he won't be there at all. He'll have just disappeared. And we'll wait for another 50 years, and he'll come out with a really great show about what's it's like to be in prison.'

Fleety won 'by a country mile', in a competition to see who could be the most seditious onstage. '(Competitors used) seditious material—killing people and blowing things up and overthrowing the government. The normal sort of seditious stuff you'd expect.'

When he's not encouraging unAustralian behaviour in others, Quantock hangs around the coffee shop at Trades



Hall making plans to overthrow the Government. He has a trained kangaroo ready to hop into Parliament House with a pouch full of explosives. It is nearly time for Rod to set his plan in motion.

'It's a matter of days now,' he says, although he admits his bank manager would rather it didn't clash with the Comedy Festival. 'When I overthrow the Government there's going to be civil chaos and unrest. The trains will start running on time, and people will get very confused and won't know where they are.'

Won't blowing up a kangaroo get him in hot water with the RSPCA? Don't worry, Quantock's got that one covered. 'I've got a marsupial mouse going in there, with four ounces of superphosphate because it's only little. No one will suspect the marsupial mouse.'

'You've got to think these things through. You can't go off half-cocked. I've got a backyard full of highly trained suicide

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I am not a comedy junkie!

by Mel Campbell

YOU know that moment of excitement when you first find out this year's Comedy Festival line-up, and there's one act that you really, really can't wait to see? Well, I'm sad to say that for me, that moment came when I read two words: Pauly Shore.

Of course, nobody I know seemed to share my excitement. I was all, 'Come on! Don't wee-eeze the jui-uice!' and, 'Buuuuuuddy!' and, 'He dated Kylie Minogue during the filming of Bio-Dome, you know.' But no biscuit. It doesn't help that Pauly's playing Little Vegas, aka The Palms at Crown Casino, which just seems so far away from the Town Hall and the rest of the Festival action.

In this edition:
Adam Vincent
The After Party
Akmal Saleh in Akmal
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Am Dilemma
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Anthony Morgan
Austen Tayshus
Ben Price in Hollywood Live and Uncut
Blood on the Yolks in the Key of Owls
Celebrity Theatresports
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Danny Alder: Get Behind Me Elephant
Danny Bhoy
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Demetri Martin: These are the other jokes
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Dirt Road Blues
Dolores: Happiness is a warm ukulele
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Fabulous Adam Richard
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Hot Off the Press
I Heart Racism
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Its a Mother!
Jimbo’s Big Night Out
Jo Randerson’s Skazze Dazzle
The Kranksy Sisters: Heard it on the Wireless
Kung Fu DaPu Sewerperhero
Life After Dick
Life of Bryan
Laughapoolooza 2006
The Lion, the Bitch and the Closet
Man Bites God: Choking Hazard
Michael Brobelny is Supersillius
My Brother and I are Porn Stars
The Nice Guys in You Say Potato, I Say Die
Pastor Michael Brings Manna From Heaven
Pauly Shore: The King of Dumb-ass Comedy
Polycomic
Sam Simmon’s Tales from the Erotic Cat
Seven True Stories and One Massive Lie
Smorgasbord
Sammy J’s 55 Minute National Tour
Something in the Water: The Best of Adelaide
Comedy
Tahir in Live and Circumcised
Tanya Losannos in Risotto Sans Frontieres
T.G.I.F.
Trevor Major is... Throbbie Millions
V.I.P: Lies, Non-sense and Celebrity Chefs
Wes Snelling: In Record Time
WONKA! A Live Cinema Remix
Yianni in Yianni’s Head

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The Pun wish to acknowledge that we are on
indigenous ground - this land is the spiritual
and sacred place of the Wurrundjeri, Bunurong,
Woiwurrung and Wathurong ancestors and
continues to be a place of significance for
all people of the Kullin nations. Further,
we thank them for sharing this land with us
and agree to respect their laws and lores.

Reviewed in Edition One: Adam Hills: Characterful,
Adam McKenzie in I know You Are But What Am I?,
Andy Muirhead is... Perky?, Arj Barker: Unmitigated, Barb
Joseph: So I Married An Arab, The Beautiful Losers, Ben
Payne in Duopoly of One, Best of the Edinburgh Fest, Big
Laugh Out, Bombay to Beijing by Bicycle, Burlesque Idol,
Call Girls, Christina Davis: The Secret Diaries of Unnamed
Fraser, COM ED OKE’ & The 48 Hour World Record
Attempt, Comedy Knockout Presents, The Crew Presents
Instant Musical Odyssey, Damian Callinan has Spaznuts,
Daniel Kitson, David O’Doherty: Grown Up, Dr Earnest
Parrot Presents Demetri Martin, Dylan Moran Live!, Fangs
and Fetish, Freestyle Love Supreme, Fran and Roxanne Are
Best Friends, Geraldine Hickey in ‘One Week in Paradise’,
Geraldine Quinn: Bad Ambassador, Greg Fleet: Word Up,
Helen Thorn is Arty Farty, Hoodwinked: The Festival Spirit,
Jason Burne: Out of the Box, Justin Hamilton: Smash!, The
Kerry Packer Experience, Kieran Butler Claims ‘Collingwood
Ruined My Life’, Lehmo: Christmas in Baghdad, Matt
Elsbury is mAd:, Matt vs The Advertising World, Michael
Chamberlin: The 10 Commandments, Midnight Trade,
Miriam and The Monkfish: A Live Cooking Show, Mon’s
Comedy Cooker, NAFF Film Festival, Penny Tangey in
Kathy Smith Goes to Maths Camp, Peter Helliar: Frisky,
Rain Pryor: Fried Chicken and Latkes, Rueben Krum is Out
of Line, Rod Quantock’s Australia!, Soubrettes & Friends
Variety a Go Go, Space Cowboy’s Mind Bending, Stephen K
Amos, Tim Minchin, Tommy Dean: Somewhere In Between,
Tripod in Self Saucing, Up There: Cal Wilson, Vaya Pashos
is... Disconnected, Weekend Trade, The Wrong Night

Reviewed in Edition Two: \$6.99 kg, 2 for 1 Live at
the Comics Lounge, Aaron Keeffe and the Artist Formerly
Known as Harry, The Adventures of Captain Frodo - Tales
of a Modern Day Showman, An Unfortunate Woman,
Andrew McClelland’s Mix Tape, Ang Fang live with Charlie
Chaplin’s The Gold Rush, Be My (Kent) Valentine, Ben
Chisholm in ‘Don’t Tell Mum’, Birdmannifesto: Night of
the Birdman, Charlie Pickering: Auto, Cluffy is Relaxed
and Comfortable, Corrine Grant: Faking It, Courteney
Hocking’s Foolish Ideas and Crackpot Inventions Show,
Dave Hughes: Hughesy Rides Again, The Dead Set,
Deliberations of a Disco Diva, Dizney on Dry Ice, The Gala
(on TV), Glenn Wool: Where Is Hell?, Goddess Wanted:
Must Provide Own Pedestal, Hard to Swallow, Harley
Breen: Son of a Preacher Man, Hip Hop 4 Dummeez,
Hot New Comics Showcase, I Know What You Did Last
Monday, Insert Name Here, The Jaundice Table, Janet
A. McLeod presents Local Laughs, Josephine O’Reilly:
SHOWJO, LaLaLuna, Lano and Woodley: Good Bye,
Late Night Impro, Lawrence Leung: The Marvellous
Misadventures of Puzzle Boy, Levelland, Mark Watson: 50
Years Before Death and the Awful Prospect of Eternity, The
Mathematical Revolution, Monsieur Camembert, Natives
Strikin’ Blak, Nik Coppin: Spiders, man!, Oh, Rachel
Berger: Loose Cannon, A Porthole into the Minds of the
Vanquished, Ramblings, Richard McKenzie: Digger, Rich
Hall & Mike Wilmot, Ridiculusmus: The Importance of
Being Earnest, Roadhouse, Rock Plus Roll, Ross Noble:
Randomist, Sam Bowring in The Wishes of Children, A
Son of Your Own, The Steamers, Spymonkey’s Cooped,
Tom Gleeson: Non Stop Tom, Two Collars, Vena Und
Schnitzel’s World Calypso Experience Tonight!, Wendy
Little in Limited Sedition, What’s New Peter Costello
Whoa Whoa!, Wil Anderson: Wil Communication,
Zack Adams: A Complete History of Zack Adams

Editorial

by Lefa Singleton



This is our last edition of *The Pun*
(Cue sad music.), but unfortunately
that’s what happens when this
marvelous Festival draws to a close. It’s
been a fantastic Festival up until this
point, and the team here at *The Pun* are
looking forward to dropping our reviewing
pens and pads to live it up before the
Festival is well and truly behind us.

We hope that you have enjoyed having
us as part of your 2005 Melbourne
International Comedy Festival. It’s been
a blast working towards our aim of seeing
every show in the Festival. We are so
close to having a review of every show,
we can practically feel it from here...with
a few reviews to be added to the website
by the end of the week, the countdown
is on to see if we really can do it! You
can visit www.thepun.com.au to see if
we reach our aim or to catch any of the
reviews you have missed at any stage.

This project has been about more than
just seeing as many shows as possible
though. The sad fact of our media climate
and the way that publicity machines work
is that the big shows get more coverage
and smaller shows struggle to get even a
single review. Our magazine aims to even
the playing field by giving each show equal
coverage, regardless of the performer’s profile
or the amount of advertising they buy.

The other half of the equation is the
writers who work with us. Thanks to VSU,
there are set to be less and less opportunities
for new and emerging writers, less ways for

them to build their folios and fewer places
to be published. It’s already a daunting
process to get your early work in print and
undergo the editorial process, and our new
writers, combined with the more experienced
members of our team, have done brilliantly
in making this publication work. Their
work has been brilliant, and I’m glad to see
that many of them are moving on to have
work published in other publications.

Most important in all of this was
giving you the best coverage we could.
Our team has worked hard to give you
an honest assessment of the Melbourne
International Comedy Festival as we
have seen it. At the least, I hope that’s
an aim we have managed to meet.

On behalf of our writers and the shows
we have managed to cover, our thanks
go to everyone who has picked up the
magazine to read it and the advertisers
who have chosen to support us. The new
opportunities that have been provided for
both are invaluable and do not go unnoticed.

So that’s all from us! Get out and enjoy
the last of the festival, it will be over before
we know it and never comes back soon
enough. Lastly, please don’t forget that
the Festival isn’t the beginning and end
of comedy here in Melbourne. There are
plenty of fantastic weekly rooms that run
all year round and can satisfy your comedy
cravings most nights of the week. Comics
don’t get less funny just because they aren’t
in a Festival; in fact, sometimes it’s better
to see them in their ‘natural’ habitat.

I AM NOT A COMEDY JUNKIE!
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

So I still haven’t made that pilgrimage to
see Pauly. But a couple of weeks ago, a friend
of mine got a phone call that had her leaping
about the lounge room with excitement.
Seems a friend-of-a-friend of hers is in
charge of chaperoning Pauly during his
Melbourne trip. Telling him where the cool
bars are, what restaurants to visit, et cetera.

‘So, um, if Pauly is looking for
some girls that, like, know how to
party, you’ll call me, right?’ said my
friend. We were both very excited.

But we were not actually planning
to sleep with Pauly Shore. You see,
we are not comedy groupies.

Just as well, really. Because my friend never
got that call. Oh, the nights spent dully at
home when we could have been enjoying
Pauly’s laconic Californian company. Oh,
the parties that ‘Pauly would’ve really liked.’

This all made me wonder why I got excited
about him in the first place. Is it irony? Is it
nostalgia? Perhaps Pauly Shore represents the
excess of the Comedy Festival—its strange
ability to attract the lumbering, rhinestone-
encrusted rump of fading celebrity. For
amid all the excitement about the hungry
young up-and-comers, the hot local acts and
international superstars at the top of their
game, there are also white elephants: acts a
little too daggy, too passé to find an audience
among the sought after young demographic.

But secretly, we want to see ‘em. We
want our eyes to measure them against
our memories. We’re telling ourselves
they’ll be deliciously kitschy and crap, but
secretly we want them to come through
and be indisputably awesome. Who
knows—perhaps Pauly is funny. So Pauly,
if you’re reading this, get your people to
call. We, like, totally still wanna party.

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(Comedy Zone 2008)

Andrew Horabin
(NAM song of the year 2003)

Xavier Michéles
(Raw Comedy Festival 2001)



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by Thomas Lahood



QUANTOCK: INSPIRING SEDITION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

marsupials. Teaching them to light a match is the hard part. There are bits of blown up marsupial all over the backyard.'

Quantock performed at the first Melbourne International Comedy Festival in 1986 with his show *Bus: Son of Tram*, and 20 years later is the only comedian still performing at the Festival. During his career spanning over 30 years, Quantock has become known for his politically charged brand of stand-up. This year in his show *Rod Quantock's Australia!* he is having more trouble than usual in keeping a lid on his anger at the Howard government—hence the jokes about blowing it up. In spite of this, he remains loyal to his country. 'I don't have a passport because I don't go anywhere you can't get to on a tram. Why would you want to go anywhere else?'

There's a bit of an urban myth going around at the moment that Quantock is the only comedian to have performed at every single Comedy Festival since it began 20 years ago. I may have helped perpetuate this myth in last week's edition of *The Pun*, but as Quantock pointed out to Declan Fay and Chris Kennett on 3RRR's 'The Pinch', it is in fact not true. 'There was a period in the mid-nineties where I became a Scientologist, and they said, "No more shows for you,"' he says. 'But I broke free. It was around the time that Nicole left Tom, I think.'

Thank God he returned to us—without him Melbourne's comedy landscape just wouldn't be the same. In search of some words of wisdom, I ask Quantock if he'd like to leave us with anything before I stop the tape.

'I'd like to leave you my gold watch. When I die, you just come around to see my family and say you're from The Pun and they'll give it to you.' Thanks, Rod. We'll cherish it.

THERE is no one in the world doing comedy quite the way Jo Randerson does it. The maverick kiwi performer's Billy T Award nominated show *Jo Randerson's Skazzle Dazzle* entirely defies genre with its addled blend of characterisation, dance, theatre, puppetry and 'wig-work'. The show's (extremely loose) narrative typifies Randerson's highly original and offbeat style: an alien entity is abandoned on earth in an 'experiment' and undergoes a series of bizzare transformations in a quest to discover its true identity.

The broad themes of the show explore loneliness, alienation and failure, and it is precisely this ability to mine the darkest aspects of humanity (or not) that make Randerson's work undeniably unique and compelling. Past works have included her brother shooting her point-blank with a rifle, and a gypsy washerwoman dipping McDonald's fries into the bloodied crotch of her baby daughter's corpse. Understandably, this kind of material does not always generate laughter, but often it does, which can be very surprising—both for Randerson and for the audience themselves.

Randerson seems fascinated by the audience reaction to her borderline humour. As noted before, her material bombs outrageously as often as it succeeds, plunging Randerson into depression and

causing us to doubt her sanity in subjecting herself to this kind of failure. Yet she persists, never diluting or compromising her work but delivering it raw and uncensored.

If any label can be applied to Randerson's weird, perverse, and wildly variegated comedy, it's that elusive word 'cult'. Randerson's work is 'cult hit' material if ever there was such a thing, and she has already established a small, baffled and bemused following among Melbourne audiences. Whether amused, confused or genuinely amazed by her material, people seem compelled to come back for more.

Troubling and difficult it may be, but Randerson's work is also very intelligent. She has a swag of aussie plaudits to attest to her brilliance—a Golden Gibbo for *Carry On Randerson* (2004) and 'Best Comedy Melbourne Fringe' for *Cracks in the Garden* (2003). She has several strings to her bow besides performance, including two published volumes of short fiction (*The Spit Children* and *The Keys to Hell*), and a sideline career as a registered marriage celebrant. She recently collaborated with eminent New Zealand physicist Paul Callahan for 'Are Angels OK?'—a Victoria University lecture series pairing writers with scientists.

What drives Jo Randerson is uncertain, but one thing is clear—her comedy is unlike anything else on this earth.

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but the others
em do. A-holes.)

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Spruikers of the World Unite!

by Justin Hamilton



HELLO everyone! Three weeks in, three issues of *The Pun* and time for some disagreement! It is time to throw a bone amongst the dogs and watch everyone tear each other apart as they try to be the King Bitch of the litter. But who amongst us would ever dare such a thing? Why I, your humble writer of this column, a bon vivant sheep wrangler with an axe to grind. Feel free to disagree with everything I write, but please have an opinion...preferably your own.

It was with quite a bit of interest that I read the column ‘I Am Not A Comedy Junkie’ by Mel Campbell, expressing her God-given right that spruiking at the Town Hall is a terrible job, nay the ‘...ultimate humiliation!’ Now I agree with Mel that spruiking may not make my top ten lists of things I would like to do with my time but the ultimate humiliation? Now I am not one for hyperbole but this is the most outrageous comment I have ever heard in my entire life! I can think of many worse scenarios that would lead to the ultimate humiliation.

Try standing in a store and a Jessica Simpson song is played and you find yourself singing along? What about making love to a beautiful lady only to call out the name of your Mother? How about performing in a room to no one? Yes, there are many worst humiliations (And only one of the

above has happened to me...I will let you choose which one.), and while spruiking is not necessarily fun, it is necessary. It is a great way to build your audience from the ground level up. In the past four festivals, I have experienced the travail of this ultimate humiliation and now have people who come to my show who remember speaking to me outside the Town Hall. If you don’t have the money to tackle the big comedy promoters (And God knows who does? Not even God I would wager.). This is the best way to find your way in the world of comedy.

I would hazard a guess that Mel is not meaning to place a dampener on the spirits of the good comedians who do spruik their cute little arses off at the Town Hall, but rather than putting them down we should celebrate their endeavour, their spirit to go out there every night and find a crowd that they entertain with mirth and mayhem. I know I do, and even though this year I have people I pay to flyer for me (a “luxury” five years in the making), I often go down early to chat to these people because they are not only comrades in the war against seriousness but also fine friends.

Thank you for your time and enjoy the rest of the Comedy Festival.
Justin Hamilton
Patron Saint of Spruikers

BIG NAMES

WE KNOW, we know. You want to see the big name acts. Well, here’s your quick round-up on what’s hot and what’s not on the international, local and ‘other’ scenes.

Adam Hills Good if: you’re after a hearty laugh Bad if: you get off on seeing a comedian tear holes in his audience and the world	Judith Lucy Good if: you want to see an amazingly talented woman tell the story of a fall from the top Bad if: biting, satirical women intimidate you
Arj Barker Good if: you want a good, solid, International comedy act Bad if: you’re tired of typical American humour	Lano & Woodley Good if: you used to be a fan of Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin Bad if: you don’t want them to go – last show, ever
Daniel Kitson Good if: you share his view that the rest of the world is infuriatingly annoying Bad if: you’re a cunt	Mark Watson Good if: you like debut performances from up and coming UK acts Bad if: you have a terminal disease
Dave Hughes Good if: Hughesy already floats your boat Bad if: you’re not into that whole ‘Aussie larrikin’ thing	Pauly Shore Good if: you can recite the words perfectly to Encino Man Bad if: you want to pay just to hear The Weasel
Danny Bhoy Good if: you’re female and into hot, funny men Bad if: you’re male, on a first date with a female	Phil Kay Good if: you want to take your kids to enjoy the festival too Bad if: you don’t have any kids to drag along
Demetri Martin Good if: you’re down with New York humour with a surreal twist Bad if: you’re after straight ‘blokey’ stand-up	Rain Pryor Good if: you like something a little more theatrical Bad if: you wanted to see her father, Richard Pryor
Dylan Moran Good if: an abusive Irishman hits your good spot Bad if: you wanted to see Black Books Live	Rich Hall & Mike Wilmot Good if: you’re a sadist Bad if: you’re easily offended
Freestyle Love Supreme Good if: you’re in the mood for madcap physical comedy Bad if: you prefer your stand-up straight	Rod Quantock Good if: you’re down with intelligent, informed comedy Bad if: your idea of politics is Fitzroy vs. Essendon
The Glass House Good if: you want to be on the ABC Bad if: you think you’re leaving your TV for a night out	Ross Noble Good if: you want to take the whole family to a solid, well rehearsed spectacular Bad if: you’re after an intimate, cosy stand-up gig
Glenn Wool Good if: moody Canadians are your thing Bad if: you still can’t tell the difference between them and ‘other Americans’	Scared Weird Little Guys Good if: you like your comedy served with a side of music Bad if: you wish it was either music OR comedy
Greg Fleet Good if: you want the best that home grown talent has to offer Bad if: sorry, we can’t think of one	Stephen K Amos Good if: a solid UK act commenting on the rest of the world appeals to you Bad if: you’re tired of the influx of UK comedians
Jason Byrne Good if: you crave totally crazy, fast paced Irish comedy Bad if: you have a heart condition	Tripod Good if: you like goofy music that makes you giggle Bad if: you’ve just got the hots for Gatesy (bad for you, that is)
Jimeon Good if: you’re a long-time fan Bad if: you’re sick of the schtick	Umbilical Brothers Good if: physical comedy and clowning are a good night out for you Bad if: you’re tired of noises made on a microphone
Joan Rivers Good if: you’re up for seeing an icon Bad if: you’re after something different	Wil Anderson Good if: you’ve been missing him since the Breakfast Show on Triple J went off air Bad if: you’re glad he went off air

Barry



Stu Leader

WHAT the hell is a Barry? It’s the award given to the best show of the Festival each year, named as such in honor of the first patron of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, Barry Humphries.

Daniel Kitson
If you don’t know who he is then we don’t think you really care about this article. He’s nominated, and if you’ve seen him before you will know why.

Tim Minchin
After the Best Newcomer Perrier in Edinburgh, Minchin has returned to the Melbourne International Comedy Festival with a killer show that certainly deserves its nomination for the coveted Barry award.

Mark Watson
Within the first week of the Festival, there are always murmurs about a show that no one was really talking about previous to the performer coming out. This year, that show was *Mark Watson: 50 Years Before Death And The Awful Prospect Of Eternity*. Word quickly spread, and the show was selling out in no time.

Sam Simmons
After taking home the best comedy award for an emerging artist at the Adelaide Fringe Festival, Simmons is at it again and up for the Barry this time. His show is most often described as bizarre but is probably more aptly described as ‘eclectic’ or ‘different’, with music, songs, stories, jokes and a touch of the absurd.

Charlie Pickering
The little local who could, Pickering has done it how you should. He’s toured the country, moved to Sydney for a radio job, come back to ‘keep it real’, won the Piece of Wood award at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, been nominated for the Perrier... I suppose it might be time for a Barry.

Demetri Martin
So his apartment burnt down and now we have to give him an award? Don’t the Americans have enough already? Please, people, let’s not give him a Barry...or, okay... just because he’s ‘good’ maybe we should.

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Kent

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7

Puzzle Boy Lawrence



reveals all to Chloe Walker

To anyone who has ever 'solved' a Rubik's cube by peeling off the stickers and rearranging them—go to Lawrence Leung's show *The Marvellous Misadventures of Puzzle Boy*. Lawrence has spent the last 20 years trying to learn the secret behind solving the iconic 80s puzzle toy. 'There are hundreds of different methods, but they all require a lot of memory and pattern recognition, and the most important thing is patience,' he says. So has he cracked it?

You'll have to see the show to find out. Puzzle Boy covers autobiographical terrain such as high school, retro toys, crushes on goth girls ('even though I wasn't very deep or cynical'), and a suitcase full of love letters never sent. 'I found this suitcase last year, and when I read them they were excruciatingly, embarrassingly angst,' he says. 'But because of the space of 10 years between when I wrote them and now, I can look back on myself and go, was I really like that?' Lawrence decided the letters would be good material for a comedy show, inadvertently bringing about a mini-renaissance of writing. 'I talk about the lost art of letter writing, because nowadays everyone's texting and emailing but no one's really writing a good letter anymore,' he says. 'I feel like it's really struck a chord—people have sent me some nice letters.'

Puzzle Boy is a more personal show than his previous work. His 2001 Melbourne Fringe Festival show *Sucker* recently received Government funding to be produced as a feature film. *Sucker*, which won the Best Solo Show award at the Fringe, is about card sharks, scams and con artists. His 2003 Comedy Festival show *Skeptic* covered ghost hunting and John Edwards-style celebrity psychics. 'That's what I used to do, almost a comedy lecture,' he says. 'But for Puzzle Boy I decided to go back to my roots of stand-up and storytelling and do a more personal show. It's very gentle.'

Those roots are firmly planted in Lawrence's university days, where he formed a comedy theatre group with Comedy Festival colleagues Andrew McLelland, Christina Adams and Adam McKenzie. According to Lawrence, university is 'a chance for people to postpone their adolescence before they figure out what they really want to do.'

'I've got friends who were doing law degrees and have quit to do comedy, like Charlie Pickering and Sammy J. I think it's quite honourable to see people risk big moneymaking professions to do something people love. There should be more comedy out there. It makes the world a nicer place.'

Nothing is nicer for Lawrence than chatting about his favourite topic: the Rubik's cube. Inventor Ernő Rubik still lives and works in Hungary, but Lawrence isn't holding out for any new breakthroughs in puzzle technology. 'Rubik never improved his work after he built the cube,' he says. 'He was always trying to make other puzzles, but nothing beats the simplicity of its design and the complexity of its execution. There have been a lot of imitators since, but the Rubik's cube is amazing. It's amazing.'

Lawrence geeks out for a minute, begging the question—what's with all the geeky themes at this year's Comedy Festival? Lawrence's theory takes us right back to high school again.

'Maybe there are two types of comics. One is like the class clown, not the bully but the popular kid who just made everyone laugh at school. And the other is the person who was probably picked on at school because they were sort of not normal. Maybe they're all outsiders, not participating but just watching the world and thinking, and they become comics. The geeks shall inherit the earth, as they say.' In this technological age where the art of letter writing is all but lost, the geeks shall indeed inherit the earth. Let's just hope that Lawrence Leung inherits Melbourne.



Adam Vincent gives you a good show and an extra treat—his warm up act Dave Blowstein who is a really funny guy. His few minutes on stage lead nicely into Adam Vincent's set.

Adam is funny, with perhaps his strongest area being his interaction with the audience. A few clever comments or jokes, and he involves the audience in his show. It seems as though he is talking about something everyone can relate to, from becoming an adult and paying bills, looking at flats that only allow a 'one cat swing' (aka tiny!) to spending time away from home. Somehow in between all of this, he talks about fat kids and the War on Terror.

The show follows something like a big circle. Comments and jokes from early on continue to crop up through the show. There was a small section of the show where he talked about mucking around with bottles and parts of the male anatomy—the blokes next to me laughed heartily, but perhaps it could pass the ladies by!

The build up to the end of the show included an undercover Jesus and a well placed Superman logo, Vincent's cheeky arrival to adulthood while he still holds on to his youth.

The show was funny, and his enthusiasm was engaging. See this thoroughly entertaining show.



The After Party is a late night comedy showcase with up-and-coming comedians and mystery guests from the Festival getting on the mic (there is no stage) in a corner of the public bar at the Exford Hotel. The best thing about this party is that it's free. The downside is that not everyone in attendance is there for the comedy, which can make it a tough gig. A percentage from all drinks sold during *The After Party* goes to the Children's Hospital, and seven thousand dollars was raised last year, including funds from other comedy functions at the hotel.

At about 11.30 pm MC Jason Carstens gets it all underway with the opening line 'Who's getting pissed?' and I'm thinking Daniel Kitson might not be the mystery guest tonight. The party starts with lots of dick jokes; the atmosphere is thick with laughter, ciggy smoke, and people bustling to get to the toilet. Early standouts are local Sean Modd and international Dan Willis, both manage to grab the crowd's attention with entertaining sets. But the highlight is when a gentleman called Greg Fleet takes the corner (stage); he is immediately relaxed in the atmosphere and delivers an astounding 40 minute set.

The After Party is a great place to either kick on after seeing a show or, if you can wade through the dick jokes, a chance to see something special. It's free, but a couple of dollars in the Children's Hospital tins at the bar will do no harm.



Variety is the spice of life, they say, and perhaps this, above all else, is why Akmal Saleh's self titled Comedy Festival show is such a thorough winner. After an ad for Cronulla with a voice-over by (someone sounding like) Alan Jones, the show begins in earnest with Akmal's opening monologue. This proves to be the highlight of the show as, on the same screen that displayed the mock-commercial, a pre-recorded Akmal emerges to interrupt and exasperate his live self. This meticulously constructed element (Akmal seems to have the wordplay with himself so carefully rehearsed that the joke takes on a sort of flawlessly ragged hilarity.) is contrasted starkly with the other extreme at the end of the show, where Akmal and sidekick Joel Ozbourn pull items they've bought at a Brunswick op shop out of a bag and make apparently impromptu jokes about their uselessness (and often furriness).

There is such a yawning divide between the marvellously creative Akmal/Akmal conversation, and the Sydney comic putting a fluffy piece of material over his eyes, standing for a moment, and realising he hasn't got an adequate line, but both unquestionably work. In between, Joel Ozbourn's 20 minute routine is solid, while Akmal's thoughts on the Cronulla riots, religion and anything else he happens upon during his time on stage are pretty steadily at the Extremely Funny end of the comedy spectrum.

Reannon Ryan

Matt Heath

Jonathon Rivett





The Amazing Johnathon

Chances are that you're already familiar with The Amazing Jonathan, the comedy magician probably best remembered for his pencil up the nose trick and gory physical illusions. Well, after a six year season in Las Vegas, the man dubbed the 'Freddy Krueger of Comedy' brings his show back to Australia.

If you've seen The Amazing Jonathan before, a lot of this show will be familiar. There are some notable additions to the act though, mostly in the form of Psychic Tania, ditzzy assistant and comedy foil. She now bears the brunt of the physical illusions, as well as a steady stream of abuse.

Without a doubt, this is a seasoned performance that plays beautifully on the audience's expectations. The Amazing Jonathan knows that the audience thinks the 'crap magician' routine is just a lead up to some actual tricks. It's not and he delights in constantly pulling that rug out from under you. At the core of the show is a sort of 'gotcha' humour where you are lead along by a trick with the inevitable punchline being that there is in no trick after all. This can actually be quite funny and is generally well delivered, but after 80 minutes the joke starts to run thin.

Overall this is polished, albeit dated, comedy that would benefit from a bit of tweaking for Australian festival-going audiences. It's a good laugh, but I can't help but think that there are better value Festival shows that you should see first.

Michael Burville



Am Dilemma

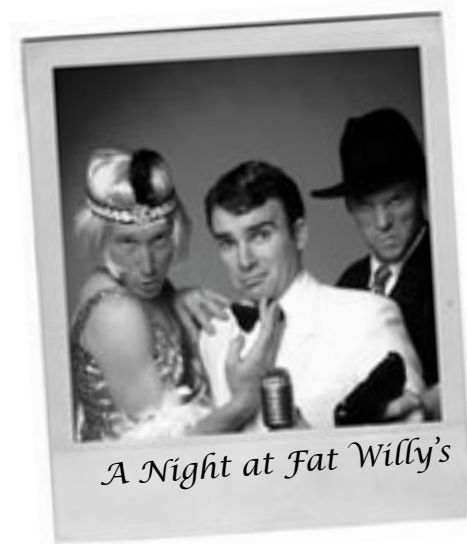
In a room small enough to moonlight as a doctor's waiting room, *Am Dilemma* (pronounced 'A Minor Dilemma') is as upfront and personal as comedy can get, and it ensures you appreciate every twitch and facial contortion that only first date jitters can inflict.

Using props that would feel at home in a year nine drama room, Justin McGinley's demurely optimistic character 'Justin Sane' gives a performance that brings Buster Keaton face to face with Mr. Bean, and injects him with the wit of Bill Oddie. You laugh at his every up and every down as he takes you on a ride through just about every comedic genre of the last 80 years.

With quaint one-liners, superb slapstick and jaw-dropping vaudevillian routines, McGinley could only up the laughs by perfecting his jocular timing as well as he has his physical.

But in the days of television, saturated with substandard sitcoms *Am Dilemma* is a fantastic throwback to when comedy was all in the hands of the performer, and it produces brilliant and comprehensively satisfying results.

Josh Humphreys



A Night at Fat Willy's

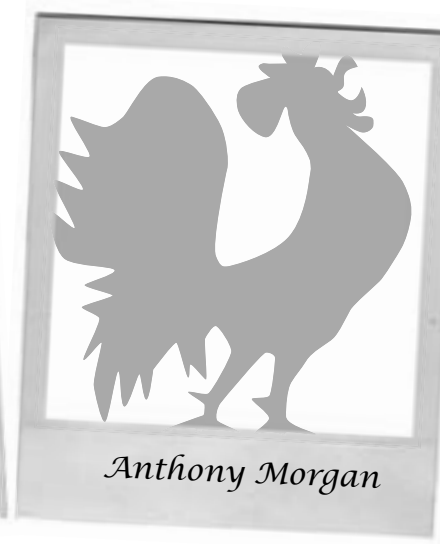
A Night at Fat Willy's is a show which The 4 Noels have performed at festivals all over the country. That said, there is a reason that they can bring it back to the Melbourne International Comedy Festival (where it's already done a season) again. It's a show that, from its very first appearance, had people talking about it. Somehow I managed to miss it before this, so I was dead keen to see it this year.

When a show has been built up like this before you get there, it rarely lives up to your expectations. With this one, however, I was surprised. It made me laugh through the whole show and even in the car on the way home thinking back to my favourite moments.

Gangsters at their best, worst and funniest are played out before the audience in a madcap, fast paced story, which parodies all our stereotypes of old movies and seedy characters.

It's clear that playing copious strange characters is the Noels forte, and in this show they really step up and play each with gusto. While there are only three performances of this show during the Festival you should try your hardest to get to see it; there is a reason it was nominated for a Barry award and continues to sell tickets wherever it plays.

Amanda Greig



Anthony Morgan

He's a genius. We all know it, which is why even when he has disappeared for so many years, people don't forget and come out to see him in one of his infrequent comedy appearances.

As Morgan took to the stage, it was obvious that his audience wanted to love him. He began slowly, explaining that his current satisfaction with life didn't really lend itself to good comedy. Most of his comedy has come from his anger. Without that anger, he's got nothing to rally against. Unfortunately, he lived up to this prediction for himself, showing that his happiness (and desire to talk about his contentment with life in rural Tassie) doesn't give him the kind of material that has an audience in stitches.

While that sounds as if it makes for a dull show, I enjoyed the chance to 'catch up' with Morgan. It was brilliant to hear his take on his new state, the characters that now make up his daily life and his opinions on Melbourne now that he's not here permanently. It wasn't side-splittingly funny nor did it break new ground, which was okay. It made me smile all the way through, and a generous audience didn't seem to mind the lack of material. It's a testament to his ability to tell a story and involve his audience, making them forget that they are there for 'comedy'.

Sarah Routledge



Austen Tayshus

25 years after being launched on an unsuspecting Australian comedy scene, Austen Tayshus still has the comedic energy that made him so popular in the '80s and '90s. Although the audience consisted of about 75 people, Tayshus played to them with the same enthusiasm he might have had were he playing a show to hundreds at Crown casino.

Tayshus kept up a good flow throughout the night, each joke and jibe leading the way for the next, as he poked fun at Greeks, Malaysians, real estate agents, film-makers, and especially Aussies. Any profession or culture represented by audience members became the subject of his jokes, but it quickly became apparent that this was the wrong type of audience to appreciate those jokes for what they were. Tayshus often tried to goad audience members into participating, either through insulting or coaxing them, but the more he tried, the less of a reaction he got. The audience seemed to have gone into Tayshus' show with no idea or only a vague idea of what to expect, and they didn't seem to like what they saw.

At times he might have pushed the boundaries of good taste, but Tayshus was disappointed that many of his jokes were met with total silence—the audience still waiting for a punchline.

The audience seemed more responsive to Tayshus' support act, Craig Millar, who avoided all political jokes and 'non PC' terms to deliver a relatively safe act.

Kristy Smale

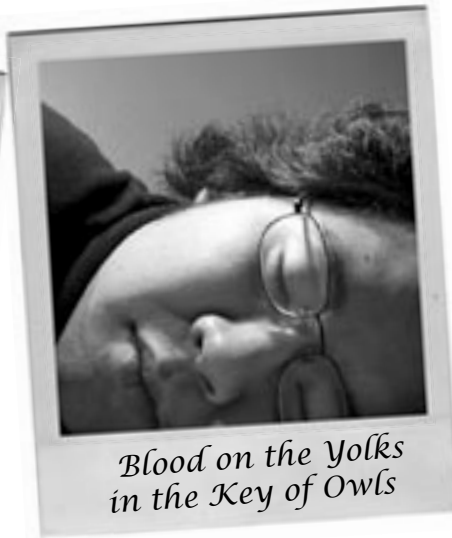


*Ben Price in
Hollywood Live and Uncut*

Perhaps I shouldn't have gone to see this show. Given that other people seemed to have an okay time and I don't think I laughed once, I will at least attempt to be a little objective about why it didn't appeal to me but seemed to give other people enough entertainment that they didn't leave.

Ben Price is probably most familiar as that-guy-who-does-those-voices on Melbourne's GOLD104. I don't mind an impersonator, I think that you can impersonate and use mimicry to create a sense of theatre and believability that is skilled and entertaining. Unfortunately, Price doesn't seem to have managed to master this off radio. His mock interviews, sketches and characters miss the mark. His impersonations lack stage presence, and while if you close your eyes you may believe the voice is right, mostly he's just a bit crap. I think he missed the bit where as well as pretending to be someone, you have to try to be funny impersonating them, too.

Get me to dress up in costumes from my local costume store, and I could pretend to be famous, too. As for his racist and entirely horrible characters such as Tim Tam from Vietnam, don't start me. Some of the voices are more on the mark than others, but I guess the message here is that Price should stick to his day job, radio clearly suits him better.



*Blood on the Yolks
in the Key of Owls*

He's an up-and-coming. A new kid on the block. Fresh meat. And he's fucking funny.

Sun was the 2004 Raw Comedy winner, and it's clear that in the two years that he's had to refine his style, he's been hard at work doing just that. His set is tight and, overall, a truly entertaining hour.

Although his profile isn't enough to warrant a room larger than the Wee Room (a closet at the tip of the Town Hall barely big enough to swing a small rodent), Sun didn't let this impinge on his performance, keeping the jokes coming hard and fast even through some questionably offensive material. No matter, at least it was amusing: particularly the shocked looks around the audience as he went a little too far, and his own subsequent giggling. It's clear he really enjoys what he's doing, and it's truly great to see.

Sun has a very pub-comic style, with clearly scripted material blending seamlessly into a clean delivery and personable attitude. Touching on everything and nothing, Sun has a great show this year, and it can only get better from here. Best finale ever.



Celebrity Theatresports

Being what it is, Theatresports is necessarily hit-and-miss, which, of course, makes it worth watching, for that passing look of fright on a performers face as they realise they have no idea how to respond to an offer. It's a modern blood sport where the meek can be heartlessly tossed aside by a callous audience, but the talented can leave a stage held shoulder-high by a cheering mob.

The National Theatre in St Kilda was the venue of Saturday's carousing, and the audience lapped up every second of it. Julia Zemiro in the role of MC was bubbly and clever, and the cast was well practiced enough to know what buttons to push to get the laughs. Some jokes might have been a little too easily made, and the physicality may have, at times, been a little too exuberantly self-aware, but the honest and earnest nature of the performers made up for any shortfall. The man sitting beside me gleefully called out happy comments at every chance—a pastime apparently shared by everyone in the theatre. The room wasn't just excited, it was jubilant with the idea of ad libbed comedy and longed to be a part of it themselves.

As for the performers, Rebecca De Unamuno was great as usual and Dan Cordeaux (as seen on TV's 'Thank God You're Here') did what he did with finesse. Improv can seem forced when it's not combined with some acting ability, but these two lifted the game to the right level.



*Christina Adams
Alive in Madagascar*

When I read the description of this show I thought it was a joke in itself. Madagascar? Surely not! It wasn't long into Adams show that I realized she really had gone to an obscure place and come home to share all in her show this year.

Adams travelled to Madagascar in 2001 as a volunteer working with an animal called the foassar (Which is so cute!). While many would expect a show about volunteering to be that kind of feel-good, explore nature kind of performance, this covers far more ground. On Adams' trip were also a bunch of Americans (tons of material there on its own), all of whom were on an anti-malarial drug, which causes hallucinations.

There was some plumb material here, all of which Adams used to perfection. Her timing was perfect, connection with the audience flawless and she didn't falter once. I wasn't sure if Adams could back up her award winning show from last year with another just as strong. After seeing her two years in a row though, it is clear that Adams is a comic destined to go from strength to strength, learning more with each season she does.

Adams was a highlight of my 2005 Melbourne International Comedy Festival. She manages to make stand-up feel theatrical and tells a fantastic tale, which makes you laugh the whole way through.



Class Clowns

With little brother in tow, I took to the Melbourne Town Hall to see the youngest performers in the Festival this year. I took him to give me an objective opinion, expecting that high school humor wouldn't really make me laugh. I couldn't have been more wrong.

Michael Chamberlin MC'd for the afternoon, surprising me with how clean he managed to keep his material. He put the mostly school-aged audience right in the mood and welcomed on the first performer. Right from the start,

I was amazed at how well the young comics managed to keep to material, which was about their own lives, perspectives and school related worlds.

With young 'uns from all over Australia proving that their funny stylings can cut it with older and supposedly wiser comics, there were some obvious highlights including the hip hop Macbeth finale (my personal favourite), remarkable imitations of ABC presenters and some great physical comedy, too. It was a fresh, funny afternoon, which showed that sometimes performers can benefit from not becoming cynical and falling into the standard patterns that many comics accept as 'how you perform'. Kids are funny, sometimes because they mean to be and sometimes just because.

Taking home the eventual winner's prize for the day was Adam Knox, who was clearly loving the limelight and more than comfortable on stage. I'm not sure what he is going to do with his giant cheque, but I'm sure it will be fodder for some great future material.

Clea Sanders

With twins, everything is on the line.

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At last: a course that caters to the comedy nerd! Run by self-confessed comedy junkie and former stand-up comedian Dom Romeo, this five week course is presented by CAE and the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. It's for anyone who's ever wanted to explore the method behind the mirth—how is comedy created and why do we laugh?

Each week Dom screens a variety of new and old comedy takes from his vast collection. This provides the basis for a lively and entertaining discussion on the nature of comedy and all things affiliated: why do certain comedians succeed where others fail? How has comedy evolved over the years and how have audience expectations changed? How do different mediums such as stage and screen affect the way in which comedy is presented?

It's an indulgent two hour forum that promises plenty of laughs and plenty of debate. With comedy groupies representing different ages and genders, it makes for a veritable mixed bag of opinions. Dom keeps the topics and genres varied from week-to-week, ensuring that new ground is continually covered. The most valuable insight comes from the guest comics who are kind enough to pop along for lengthy Q & A sessions. This course is a great way to discover past and present comics, as well as developing a critical perspective on the current festival acts.

Bex Lee



At about 11.45 pm I was standing in line waiting to go into the show and talking to my friend Cameron. Little did we know that over the next seven hours Cameron would have a starring role in one of the bigger events of the 2006 Comedy Festival.

That's one of the joys of a Daniel Kitson gig—you never know where he's going to go, and you never know what he's going to do with you along the way. You just know that he's going to do something with the audience. When the gig is seven hours long, all bets are off.

The line-up for the night was a cavalcade of top end comedians (Pete Rowsthorn, Greg Fleet, Charlie Pickering, Michael Chamberlin, Sam Simmons, Eddie Perfect, David O'Doherty, and Fiona O'Loughlin), which would have cost several hundred dollars had you tried to see them all separately. Even then, some acts (like the Umbilical Brothers) busted out some classic material that you won't be seeing anywhere else. But the person who got the most cheers was audience member Cameron, who had been adopted as almost a sidekick by Kitson for the night. Kitson could have kept those cheers for himself, but he seemed to take an almost childish glee in turning his gargantuan intellect towards sharing the glory with select audience members. That's probably why more than a hundred people lasted all the way until seven in the morning, a feat that any other MC would have struggled to match.

Scott Pollard

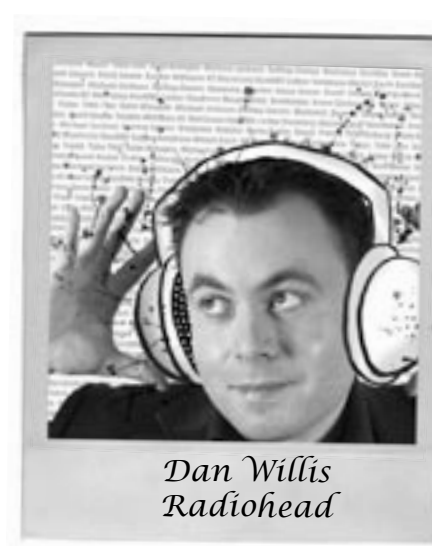


The Comedy Zone consists of a quartet of 'stand-up and coming' comics who have proved themselves worthy of a Festival platform. Andrea Gibbs, Mat Kenneally, Josh Thomas and Nellie Wight are four fresh new faces of comedy. Each with a distinctly different style, these young performers are a joy to watch, not just because they're gutsy, but because they're genuinely funny.

Mat Kenneally plays the role of MC, warming-up the crowd with his affable manner and conversational style of comedy. Josh Thomas follows with endearing anecdotes of parental misguidance. Nellie Wight is non-effusive and likes to court controversy, while Andrea Gibbs is high-impact and loads of fun. Each comic has their own approach, but the most successful is Josh Thomas, whose virginal looks defy a very cheeky tongue. Thomas won the coveted Raw Comedy gong last year, so it's not surprising he's a standout.

The Victoria Hotel is an ideal venue with an easily accessible bar that sees many punters standing rather than sitting. It feels rather like a comedy heat at your local pub, and the relaxed atmosphere is part of the show's appeal. The acts are surprisingly polished considering that they're the 'green team' of this year's Festival. Despite some requisite nerves, these comics hold their own and draw a steady stream of laughter from the crowd. Josh Thomas is worth the admission price alone. Go and support them.

Bex Lee



You don't have to like the band Radiohead to be a part of Willis' comic journey, as he says during the show, if his whole routine was about Tom Yorke and Co. it might be a bit depressing.

Willis takes you through a series of his life experiences, punctuated with short grabs of music that serve as start and end points for the stories. He uses a whiteboard with illustrated butcher's paper, turning the pages over to introduce the next song or chapter. Remember what song was playing when you had your first kiss or broke up with your partner? You get the general idea behind the show, but is it funny? For most of this one, it was. Willis is an experienced comedian and delivers a well-rehearsed, quick fired set that involves the audience at various points to break up the show with some short grabs of improvisation.

Willis tells us his show usually runs for a couple of hours, but he had to cut it down for the Festival. Venue time constraints on the night made that last 15-20 minutes a bit rushed, as he looked to round out the performance on a high. But he still managed to pull it off. There were a lot of pages left on the butcher's paper that we didn't see, and that's a shame because it felt like Willis was just warming up.

Matt Heath



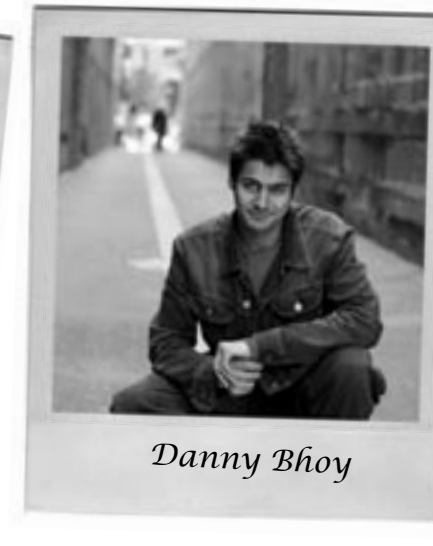
Danny Alder is 27. There's a long list of rock stars who died at 27—Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison. This means Danny has only until his next birthday to become a rock star. Part music and part stand-up, Danny Alder's *Get Behind Me Elephant*, set in the relaxed and cosy red glow of Bar Open, explores what it takes to become a rock star.

In lieu of 'Australian Idol' SMS phone voting, Danny uses audience participation in his rendition of 'Stairway To Heaven' to gauge whether he should continue to pursue the path to rock stardom.

Using a sheet as a projector screen, Alder, with the help of his band, delves into the elements of rock stardom. These essentially turn into stand-up routines as he plays a medley of air instruments, reveals the truth about the ten biggest rock myths, and in one of the most hilarious moments of the show, uncovers why the Church of Satan website sells big band jazz CDs. Alder manages to use comedy and music with equal success to entertain his audience.

Get Behind Me Elephant is an excellent show for those of us who have ever dreamed of being a rock star. Danny Alder is a promising comic with the ability to intertwine music and comedic interludes, and *Get Behind Me Elephant* is well worth the trip away from the Town Hall precinct. He thoroughly deserves a larger audience than the one in attendance the night of my review.

Jade Gulliver



When you sit in the audience waiting for a show and there are two giant rotating thistles being projected either side of the stage, you know you're in for observational humour that's country based. And that's exactly what the majority of Danny Bhoj's humour is. It isn't exactly genre-busting, it's not controversial, and it's not going to win any awards for pushing the boundaries, but it will make you laugh and laugh and laugh...

Danny spends a lot of time during his set talking about the food, lifestyle and culture of his home country Scotland. He takes a tongue-in-cheek attitude to all this, which makes you believe he has no qualms with his country. He just enjoys poking fun at it. He employs the same tactic when talking about the differences between Scotland and Australia.

The only flaw to his set was the fact that some of this material has been aired before in the *Montreal Comedy Festival Gala* (broadcast on TV here). This is only the smallest of flaws though, as I still laughed throughout and it can be attributed to Danny's on stage presence. He's all smiles and charisma—and that's the charm of Danny Bhoj: he could tell you the world's worst joke and all he'd have to do is smile and the audience would be roaring with laughter. If other comedians have had me laughing harder, Danny had me laughing throughout his entire set, and that is very rare.

Tim Adams



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*D-Cuppetry
Dance of the D-Cups*

Tits, boobs, jugs, norks. Everyone loves them, so sing Emma and Louise, the D-Cuppeteers.

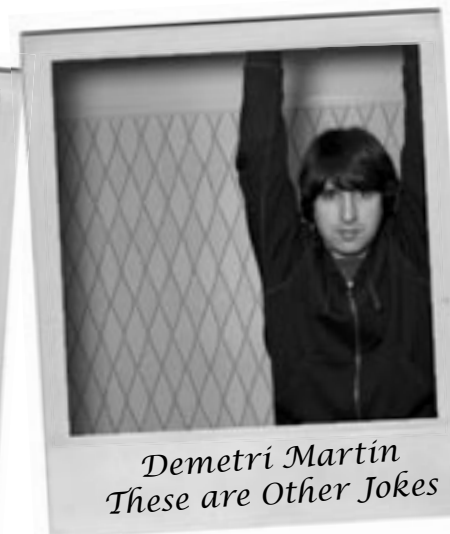
The sold out crowd were (on average) older than most of the shows I've been to—I think this is one for the over 35s. But despite not being in that age group, or a huge fan of visual comedy, I quite liked this show.

I think it was the inherent likeableness (Yes, it's a word.) of the comediennes. Emma and Louise have such charisma and stage presence that you can't help being drawn to them and laughing along as they contort, stick stuff on, and act with their mum-boobs (a term I use for big, er... more 'mature' breasts).

Having seen *Puppetry of the Penis* and laughed as the men in the audience nervously crossed their legs, I was a little scared about this show as I thought it would be an hour of 'Oh GOD! Don't do that to your boob, you sadistic freak!' But you know what? The most painful looking thing is the first real trick. The rest are cleverer or just plain *weird*, rather than ouchy.

In the 50 minute show, there are songs, dances, and more boob related activity than you ever thought possible.

D-Cuppetry is recommended for people who enjoy silly visual comedy performed by two self-assured, funny women. And, obviously, for those who like big boobs.



*Demetri Martin
These are Other Jokes*

Performing his second show at this year's Festival, Demetri Martin could be seen as capitalising on a captive audience. Thankfully for us, his shows are actually worth seeing.

These Are Other Jokes consists of a varied collection of comic material, the majority being observation based humour interspersed with musical whimsy. Throw in a dash of prop comedy, and it is fair to argue that Demetri has catered for all audiences.

One problem Demetri has to face is the amount of his material that his audience actually understands fully. On a number of occasions throughout his performance, Demetri would pause after the first instance of a joke awaiting a reaction. If there was no reaction, Demetri would have to draw it out and explain the joke in full to draw a laugh or write the joke off altogether—either stating how shit that joke was or playfully blaming the audience.

Those seeing Demetri Martin should already be aware that there is a certain intellectual component to his comedy that requires a bit of afterthought. I haven't managed to see *Dr Earnest Parrot Presents Demetri Martin*, so I cannot offer comment on how much of the material in *These Are Other Jokes* is reproduced, or if any is at all.

From what I have seen of Demetri, I'm happy to report that *These Are Other Jokes* is completely fresh material. I definitely recommend checking out *These Are Other Jokes*, but don't sweat it if you don't get every joke.



*Die Roten Punkte
(The Red Dots)*

One of the most agreeable things about the Comedy Festival is that it gives audiences the chance to sample some obscure offerings, which can reveal genuine delights. Siblings Otto and Astrid who form German punk-pop duo *Die Roten Punkte (The Red Dots)* are, as their name suggests, a screwed-up Teutonic version of *The White Stripes*. As they took to the stage, their exclamations of 'Thank you, Melbourne!' after every song made one think they were performing before thousands. That they were, in fact, buried deep in the bowels of Trades Hall with about 25 punters made their delusions of grandeur all the more hilarious, and strangely poignant.

Despite songs played at a speed that would embarrass *The Ramones*, the show started a little slowly, each tune indistinguishable from the last. The act gained momentum, however, as Astrid and Otto's wide eyed innocence slowly gave way to compulsive behaviour, overtones of incest, petty jealousy and sibling rivalry. Clare Bartholemew and Daniel Tobias, as Astrid and Otto respectively, are talented performers. Their tight routine combines comedy, music, cartoon violence and crappy German accents. Highlights included Astrid serenading an audience member with her version of *The Carpenters*' 'Close To You' (on glockenspiel, no less), and then Otto had his moment in the sun as he swapped his guitar for a keyboard—the result a very funny pastiche of early German techno (à la *Kraftwerk*).

We may have been in Trades Hall, but for one very special night, it felt more like Festival Hall.

Lisa-Skye Ioannidis

Paul D'Agostino

Mike Katsieris

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\$6.99 kg	The Amber Lounge	7:00pm		*					*		*					*		*					*		*					*		*				
\$6.99 kg	The Amber Lounge	9:00pm					*							*							*													*		
* 160 Characters	Umbrella Revolution	7:00pm																															*	*		
The 17th Annual Great Debate	Melbourne Town Hall	5:00pm												*																						
2 for 1 Live @ The Comic's Lounge	Comic's Lounge	8:30pm	*	*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*	*	
2006 Vena Und Schnitzel's World Calypso	The Croft Institute	8:00pm		*	*	*	*				*	*	*	*				*	*	*	*				*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*	*	
The 20th Brian McCarthy Moosehead Benefit	Melbourne Town Hall	8:00pm																										*						*		
The 4 Noels: A Night at Fat Willy's	Melbourne Town Hall	8:15pm						*						*							*						*			*					*	
* The 4 Noels: The N.A.F.F Film Festival	Trades Hall	7:00pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
* A Porthole into the Minds of the Vanquished	Melbourne Town Hall	7:15pm		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
A Son Of Your Own	Trades Hall	10:30pm	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Aaron Keffee & Artist Formerly Known as Harry	Elephant & W'Barrow	7:15pm						*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Aaron Keffee & Artist Formerly Known as Harry	Elephant & W'Barrow	9:30pm															*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		
* Adam Hills: Characterful	Melbourne Town Hall	7:15pm			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
* Adam McKenzie	Victoria Hotel	7:00pm		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Adam Simmons Toy Band	Footscray Arts Centre	2:00pm																				*												*		
Adam Vincent	Duckboard House	8:45pm																				*												*		
Adam Vincent	Duckboard House	10:45pm															*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		
* The Adventures of Captain Frodo	Trades Hall	8:30pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
The After Party	Exford Hotel	11:00pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
* Akmal Saleh: Akmal	Victoria Hotel	9:45pm		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Akmal Saleh: Akmal	Melbourne Town Hall	9:45pm						*						*							*					*			*					*		
* Am Dilemma	Trades Hall	9:15pm						*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
* The Amazing Johnathan	The Palms at Crown	9:30pm												*			*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		
An Unfortunate Woman	La Mama	6:30pm							*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
An Unfortunate Woman	La Mama	8:30pm									*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
* Andrew McClelland's Mix Tape	Duckboard House	9:45pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
* Andy Muirhead is.....Perky?	Melbourne Town Hall	8:15pm	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
The Ang Fang Quartet LIVE	Trades Hall	4:00pm					*						*								*				*			*						*		
Anthony Menchetti in Ants Pantz!	Butterfly Club	9:00pm															*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*</						



* Indicates performances on Sunday commencing one hour earlier than listed

* Indicates performances on Sunday commencing one hour earlier than listed



Dirt Road Blues

Your view on *Dirt Road Blues* will completely depend on why you're going to see it. If you're interested in top-notch musically interpretive Bob Dylan covers, perhaps JB Hi-Fi would be better suited. But if you're interested in seeing talented musicians crank out some top-notch renditions of classic Bob Dylan for charity, *Dirt Road Blues* is the show you've been waiting for.

Led by *Tripod's* Scott Edgar and Cameron Bruce (*GUD, the Polaroids*), the band and their extensive line-up of guest performers ran through a menagerie of songs from Dylan's five decade catalogue, with all the proceeds going to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

The songs were a bit hit-and-miss, some being butchered and some being close to bettered, which only served as a fitting and reflective tribute to Dylan.

Unreflective of the man, however, was the apparent inability of the performers to learn the words to the songs. All were guilty, but it's to be expected when the gig was probably pulled together in a couple of weeks.

Half the performers seemed to be Dylan enthusiasts, but the other half surely wouldn't be able to pick him from a 1930s jazz trombonist, leading me on an emotional rollercoaster of solidarity and contempt.

I will never forgive them for their rendition of 'It's All Over Now, Baby Blue', but the show is well worth seeing for fans of Dylan and fans of Asylum Seekers.

Josh Humphreys



Dolores
Happiness is a warm ukulele

Dolores Homann, this year's triple j Raw Comedy state finalist for New South Wales, draws on her personal experiences as a wife, mother, clairvoyant and circus skills teacher.

The show is a mixture of physical and stand-up material. Dolores tackles material covering breastfeeding, menstrual pads and the mental health issues of her mother and siblings. While there is always plenty of potential to take these topics into highly successful comedic realms, Dolores failed to deliver the 'rawness' promised in the flyer, opting instead to quickly move from one topic to the next rather than stopping for a deeper exploration of what can make these situations absurdly entertaining.

Dolores' comfort on stage is evident, and her ability to confidently deliver her material is never in doubt; although, the small turn-out and the pulsating music from the bar downstairs never really provided her with the environment necessary to properly engage her audience.

The ukulele promised in the title of her show made a brief appearance during Dolores' performance of her politically correct version of the children's nursery rhyme 'The Farmer in the Dell'. This swipe at the ever increasing attempt to politically sanitise children's entertainment was, for me, the highlight of the show and confirmation that Dolores does indeed possess some solid comedic talent.

Kyla Morgan



Don Pasquale

Audience interaction, stuffed toys, headbutting, chaos...Yes, you read correctly, this was Donizetti's Don Pasquale. Ocker accents replaced the recitative, and jeans and saucy undies replaced conventional costumes.

Title boards amusingly informed of opera's foibles, such as lyric repetition and overlapping 'dialogue' during quartets, but they eventually became distracting and depressingly self-deprecating. As blatant as the placards was the agenda:

1. 'Go for laughs...even at genuinely cathartic points. Comic first, opera second.' Unfortunately, this tone and pacing felt more like a panto or student revue with opera singers accidentally along for the ride. The audience tittered away, but belly laughs were scarce.
2. 'Educate the punters and reduce opera-phobia...even if the show is an unrelenting piss-take of opera itself.' For the earnest opera lovers in the audience, this seemed like a bit of a slap in the face. It also seems a shame that non-singer Anne Radvansky stole the show. Roger Howell brought reassuring experience to the title role. Kristy Swift's performance provided an unconventionally engaging Norina and a deadly serious giant cactus. Hilarious!

This was an approachable package for opera virgins, with fresh creativity, excellent acting and competent vocal performances, but few spine-tingling operatic moments. It appeared that neither the comedy punters nor opera purists left feeling entirely satisfied. However, the menu for Lyric Opera's 2006 season looks set to sate the fans of more meaty operas.

Deanne Chiu



Earl Okin in
Musical Genius & Sex Symbol

Here's a fact for all you trivia junkies: with 500 performances under his belt Earl Okin is included in the *Guinness Book of Records* for being the most performed artist at the Edinburgh Festival. With this kind of exposure and experience you'd expect Earl to put on a pretty slick show. And he did. From the moment this versatile musician, songwriter and raconteur walked on stage his smooth seduction of the audience began.

Dressed in a three-piece suit, spats and horn-rimmed glasses, and playing either guitar or piano, Earl delivered a spot on musical performance of original songs and inspired renderings of contemporary classics such as a bossa nova version of 'Teenage Dirtbag'. Earl's irreverent journey through a variety of musical genres—including Andrew Lloyd-Webber show tunes—was intermingled with saucy comments about his 'shivery bits' as well the horny feeling he gets when improvising brass sounds using just the microphone and his mouth.

Even Earl's idea of audience participation is given a sexual twist as he encourages us in a group singalong he calls 'The Safe Sex Group Song'. By the end of his show, I'm feeling a little light-headed and I'm not sure if it's because of Earl's disturbingly seductive sexuality or the pervasive smell of the aftershave my neighbour in the audience is wearing. Either way, the experience leaves its mark, and I walk out of the show feeling like I've just been on a date with Austin Power's long lost brother. And enjoyed it.

Kyla Morgan



Edinburgh Festa Besta

A rambunctious and lively audience inhabited the Comedy Club on a wet and wintry Wednesday night, eager for laughs and the amber ale to warm the cockles. Thankfully, the *Edinburgh Festa Besta* delivered on both counts—but the question remains: how does one VB + one Cascade Premium = \$14? I'm still reeling.

That aside, the ebullient MC Dave Williams kicked off proceedings with tales of tram rides and a vast array of penis or penis related jokes. Nothing ground breaking; but knob jokes tend to garner the biggest laughs when the delivery is impeccable, which it was. There was a fantastic atmosphere, in part, aided by Williams' easygoing nature.

Next up was the rough and ready support act. He was in your face, sneering and arrogant, with a heavy dose of unchecked aggression—he was, undoubtedly, the standout performer of the night. However, there was one major problem: he was on stage for all of five minutes. It was disappointing as he was refreshingly uncompromising in his humour—and he looked like a Mafioso. Some people have all the luck!

However, the next performer was much weaker on material. It did seem that he was rather inebriated, muttering inane comments, which were funny but by no means original. He seemed to accept that a few jokes weren't having the desired effect. Next Pommy Johnson brought his bag o' tricks and comic order was restored. *Edinburgh Festa Besta* was more hit than miss and an enjoyable night out.

Gillian Terzis



Elbowskin
Comedy Gondola

Comedy Gondola: it doesn't really mean anything. Dave and Ernie (ElbowSkin) introduce the show via a brief video projection of them in a real boat (possible Gondola) attempting to explain the title. It might have been shot in Venice or maybe on the Yarra.

After ElbowSkin's one hour on stage, I can't remember the title of the show and don't care because I'm busy loading into my memory bank 'I saw ElbowSkin at the Comedy Festival 2006 before they were huge.' This sort of performance is no accident. Three prior festival appearances and a stint at the Adelaide Fringe have molded this talented duo's show into something special.

ElbowSkin mix it up with a healthy dose of their hilarious original songs, short video projections, audience participation (Without the cringe factor, you're safe in the front row.) and banter between each other. Although they have done this show night after night, ElbowSkin gives the crowd a 'Tonight we did this one especially for you' feel. Their enthusiasm, energy and confidence on stage are infectious, and the laughter from start to finish proves they have it right.

This is a polished performance delivered with smiles and laughter from ElbowSkin who are clearly enjoying themselves on stage. Dave and Ernie promise to be back next year, and I can't wait because I saw them in 2006 before they were huge.

Matt Heath



Eye Candy



Fabulous Adam Richard



Family Ties

There's something worrying about walking into a dingy bar and seeing barflies and drunks at 7:45 in the evening. 7:45 people! Because of this I had major reservations about seeing the show. What kind of comics would play here? And there being three comics and an MC had me in a right state. However, I was informed that the comedy would be upstairs and not in the main bar. Relief was mine...until I went upstairs and saw what one of the comics referred to as an unkempt attic. I'm glad this Festival isn't an international event. Oh, hang on a second...

The comics weren't bad. I found some of the material funny. Don't get me wrong though; these guys were not stand-up superstars. You couldn't see them standing alongside Danny Bhoj or Dylan Moran. To be fair, all these guys need is time and polishing. You could see the makings of future talent in their professionalism and timing. It's just that some of the jokes were a little flat and a little familiar.

Their dealings with a constant heckler were a testament to their professionalism. A bar full of drunks, some of them mean drunks, can test your ability to hold an audience, and these guys handled it with ease. A lot of the laughs came from those dealings. I say, give these guys time and they might change from a group of guys, who remind you of your drinking buddies telling stories around the BBQ, to pretty decent comics.

This was a preview of *Fabulous*, Adam Richard's limited season show. Despite his nerves at the beginning, Richard was comfortable with his material, and the show felt more like a one-sided bitch session with a girlfriend than a formal stand-up routine.

I saw his 2004 show *Bitch* and loved it. He's one of my favourite locals...but that may be because I don't listen to the FoxFM and never hear his witticisms sandwiched between tracks by James Blunt and The Pussycat Dolls.

Richard is definitely not for everyone, but the crowd on the night adored his merciless sledging of celebrities and the 'nicest guy in the Festival', as well as his ubercamp delivery.

It's refreshing to see a comedian bitch—really, vindictively, snarkily bitch—about other celebrities, without having their 'Oops, too far!' radar kick in. Richard claims this is the gayest show of the Festival, and I gotta agree—especially with the all singing ending (a hilarious highlight).

The only shortfall of the show—and it is a big one—is the length. Size shouldn't matter in comedy (Or anything else—Yes, I feel compelled to whack in a dick joke. I'm reviewing Adam Richard after all.). But the show started late and barely touched the 40 minute mark, leaving the crowd gagging for more (ooh, er).

Nonetheless, this show comes highly recommended (as long as you know what you're getting yourself into), especially if he puts in another twenty minutes before the premature ending.

Despite a 30 second snatch of the theme music and the name, *Family Ties* has nothing to do with the late and unlamented sitcom. Instead, it's an assured, confident and funny exploration of how our family lives shape us. Many comedians use their wacky families as material for stand-up, but *Family Ties* is refreshing for Nelly Thomas' clear affection for the members of her family who appear in this character driven show.

Exploring aspects of your own personality on stage can often be a recipe for introspective stand-up that doesn't engage an audience, but Nelly Thomas resists the temptation to leave her audience behind, with a genuine warmth that is as engaging as it is funny. *Family Ties* examines how Nelly herself would have been different if her family circumstances had been changed—if she had absorbed (Christian) faith, if she had been born into wealth, or if she had been born a man. In the latter, Thomas avoids the stock 'men and women are different' comedy clichés, opting for a character based affectionately on an uncle from her small-town Western Australian roots.

Family Ties is solid proof that right-on, left leaning comedy needn't confine itself to clobbering John Howard or trying to ram every issue that we dislike into one show. Instead, with affection for family and community, we can laugh at ourselves as well as the world. Nelly Thomas' *Family Ties* and is the kind of show we need much more of.

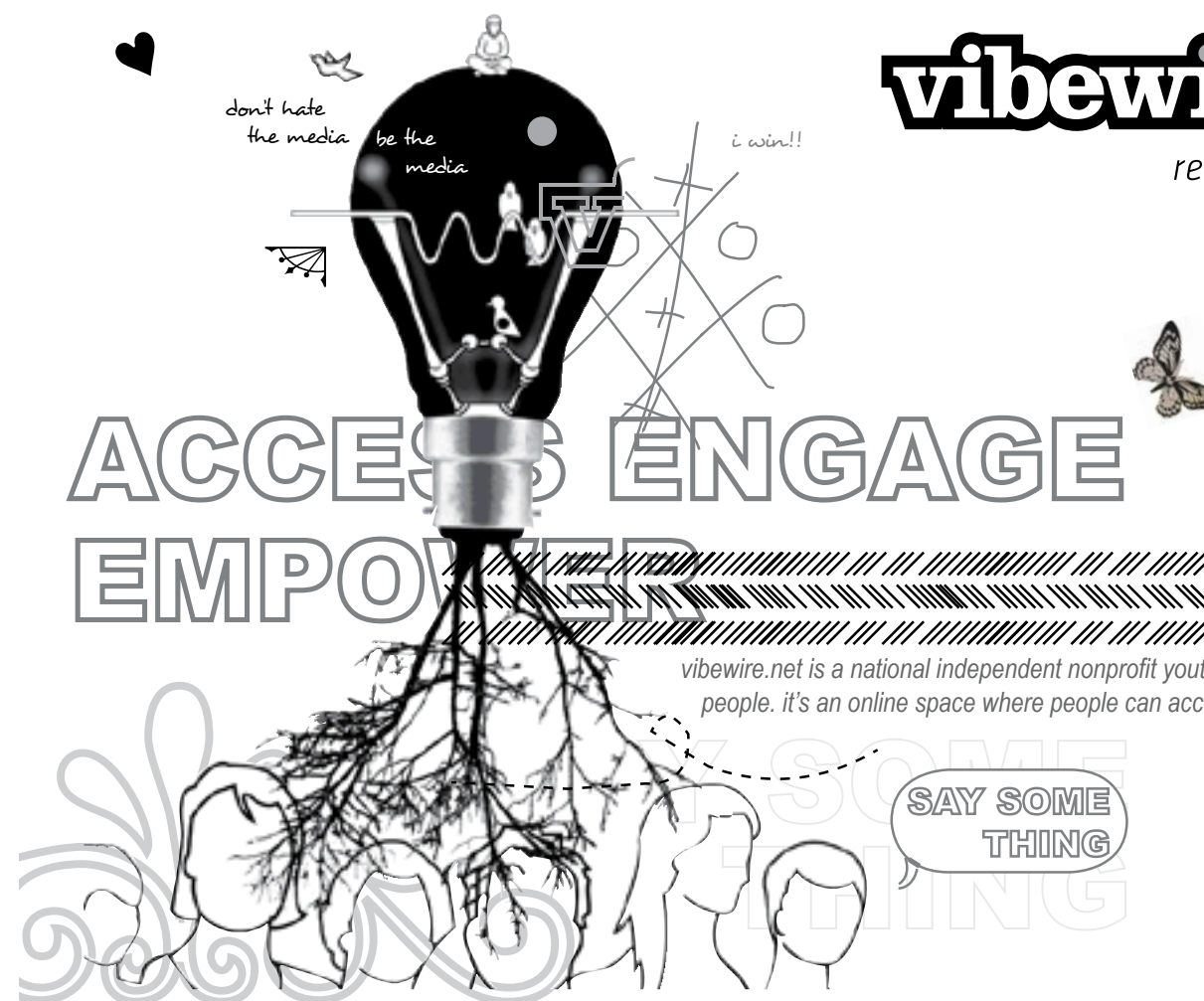
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Hate is too strong a word; therefore, I'm going to say that I disliked this show. Really disliked it.

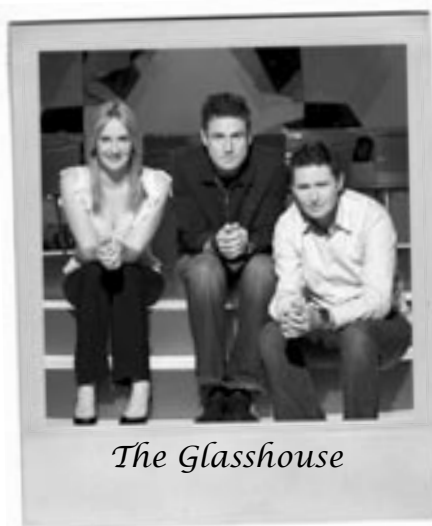
In an eclectic (Read: slightly dingy.) room, I watched as one-by-one four comedians descended the theatre steps. For 12 minutes each comic performed their particular act as a character: an uptight government official, an eccentric old woman, a rock star parodying Courtney Love and a nudist athlete. It felt like the longest 48 minutes of my life.

Firstly, if the routine involves smutty humour, best check that you have the cheekiness, wit, or charm to pull this off. Perhaps someone should have mentioned this to the comedian who pretended to retrieve a used tampon from her body, and after holding it up to the audience, chose to attach it to a lead and take it for a walk. Don't ask. Secondly, something that is sharp and witty to read does not always translate into the same thing when spoken in a comedic show. At times during the 'government officials' skit, I felt as though I were back at a university lecture, except here I couldn't leave.

To be fair, all of the comedians acted their characters out well, indicating that they aren't bad performers. It's just that the material they were working with was terribly dull and at times downright atrocious.

As much as I want to support local acts, I can't in good conscience recommend that people spend \$15 to see something that barely had me register a smile.

Sarah Carson



Ah, 'The Glass House'. Cool format, very cool guests and, of course, very cool Hughesy—my favourite. Seriously, the guy has just got his comic shtick down so perfectly that he can utter one word and have people convulsing with reckless abandon. The guests included Cal Wilson, David O'Doherty, Jason Byrne, Lehmo and Akmal Saleh, plus a couple of breakfast radio chicks—whose obvious experience in having to be assertive in getting a word in amongst very talkative guys seemed to hold them in good stead.

I don't mean to generalise and am purely speaking from my own experience, but sometimes being a chick in this field (particularly in improv, though not with everybody) can feel kinda like driving on a busy highway—you have to almost force yourself into the next lane in a proactive manner: if you wait for a break in the traffic, you're only going to grind to a halt. Contentious? Perhaps. But true methinks. Cal Wilson for instance—she was (and is) hilarious—but seemed to have a hard time getting a word in on several occasions. Luckily, Wil seems pretty onto it in terms of facilitating, though there were a few times when a couple of comedians got so carried away with their rants that Wil joked, 'Hey, I'm not actually in this episode.'

Of particular note was Dave Hughes getting dressed up and being interviewed as a poodle, with Jason Byrne donning a rubber glove ready for a urine inducing perineum tickle. I'll sure as hell be interested to see how they edit THAT.

Jenny Wynter



Hot off the Press is a special event that is a bit out of step with the rest of the Comedy Festival. This does not, however, make it any less entertaining than anything else you will see.

2006's *Hot off the Press* guest list comprised of Shaun Micallef, Corinne Grant, Mark Knight, David O'Doherty and Demetri Martin. For the two hours that the event ran, the audience was treated to a comedic history of each guest involved and how they managed to get where they are today.

Anybody interested in comedic writing or the art of comedic performance should definitely book tickets to *Hot off the Press*. It is fascinating to see comedians being put on the spot to talk about their methodology for producing comedy coupled with the pains of writing, producing, editing and performing.

Another interesting part of the show is the fact that the guests aren't there primarily to entertain, but inform and educate the audience about what it takes to make it in the comedy business.

Therefore, the guests are less interested in performing and more interested in showing the audience things they've been involved in or produced. This makes *Hot off the Press* a far more personal experience for anyone who is a fan of the guests attending. There is even a Q&A section at the end of the show, which unfortunately had to be cut short due to time constraints. My only regret is that I couldn't come up with a question to ask the guests.

Paul D'Agostino



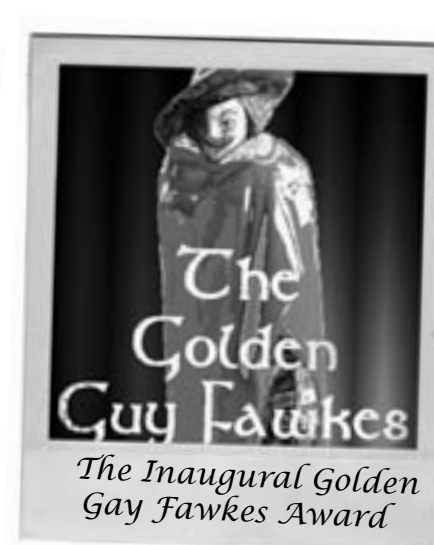
I don't consider myself a racist person, yet I have been known to have a laugh at politically incorrect content in the past...so knowing what to expect from *I Heart Racism*, I knew how I would respond was a pretty grey area. I was pleasantly surprised to find that the rest of the audience felt the same. While we started off chuckling quietly, by the end we were all laughing loudly, comfortable in the knowledge that its underlying message about racism is a positive one.

I Heart Racism is a clever, yet slightly underwritten, play about a left wing, uni student Cameron sent to live with his right wing Grandpa. When Grandpa runs for town Mayor, with one of his racist slogans being about making the town 'a whiter and brighter place', Cameron's response hits all the right notes.

Written and performed by Dave Bushell and Tommy Dassalo (winners of the Special Commendation for Best Comedy at the Melbourne Fringe 2005), the at times weak script is made up for by the likeable comic performers. The use of audiovisual equipment to show Grandpa's election campaign TV ads was comedy gold! I only wish that the guys hadn't jumped out of character throughout the play, which lent a stilted and jolty feeling to the show.

I don't recommend you see this if you are easily offended by politically incorrect, racist humour... but if you can see past the character flaws to the overall message of the show, you'll have a few laughs.

Kathryn Martin



Settling into the Old Melbourne Gaol, the honour of the *Golden Guy Fawkes Award* surrounded the stage, along with some creepy auras and a few drunk ghosts. With host Rod Quantock (C'mon, who else would you get to present the award for the comic 'most likely to blow up parliament'?) commanding the whole show, he first introduced Corinne Grant, who jumped into the scene with some ripe Terrorism material. As each comic followed, the stakes were raised higher and higher for their material to out-sedition the previous and prove their hatred of our current Government.

Musically, entertainment came from Eddie Perfect, Paul Kelly, Wendy Little, Kieran Butler and the ever-painful Joe Dolce. Other great performers included Gerard McCulloch and Andrew Horabin. Whilst Greg Fleet's material was slightly off-centre, he still put in a stellar performance and was duly awarded a winning sentence of 45 years. It's a stretch he truly deserves.



It's a Mother! is a brilliant piece of theatre that investigates the nature of the mother and son relationship in the Australian-Greek context. The performance is presented in nine short skits, each written by a different person and performed by three actors who power through all the different roles.

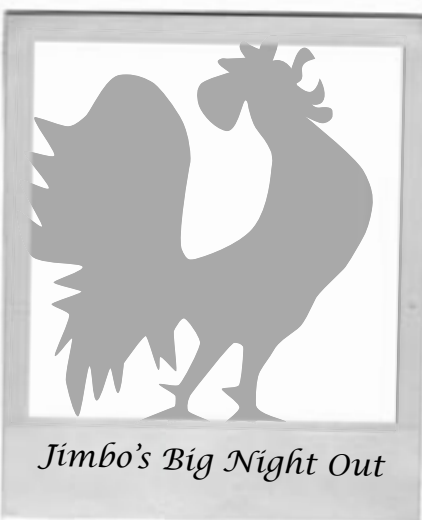
The segments concentrate on the domineering figure of the Greek mother and how she alternatively spoils and manipulates the men in her life, particularly the son. Some of these stories are stronger than others, but the cast takes to all of the material with energy and passion.

It's a Mother! is best looked at as a theatre rather than comedy, as its strength is in the skill of its actors and depth of its content, rather than the delivery of laughs. Unfortunately, portions of the show will be lost on anyone who is not Greek. Many of the jokes are not only aimed at very particular areas of Greek life, but also often delivered in Greek. While this elicited some big laughs from segments of the audience, it left others, myself included, cold at times.

However, this is a must see show for anyone with Greek or Hellenic connections, particularly women with a Greek mother-in-law. For everyone else, it's a matter of enjoying the show as a very well-crafted piece of theatre but being prepared to feel left out of some of the jokes. This is a fair trade off, though, for such a poignant and well delivered show.

Joel Davis

Michael Burville



Jimbo's Big Night Out

There are those who would class *Jimbo's Big Night Out* as crass comedy, appealing only to the lowest common denominator. Although I can concede that the show is rather blunt and coarse, it isn't the lowest kind of people that will enjoy this show but the deepest and darkest parts of everyone. *Jimbo's Big Night Out* is a virtual cavalcade of jokes that will make even the foulest mouthed sailor want to blush.

Jimbo's Big Night Out is your typical pub comedy show, something for those true blue Australians who think that dick and knob gags are funny. However, Jimbo's, no matter how descriptive or expletive it may be, does not contain any homophobic or racial material, which saves it from degenerating into something only the worst audience would want to watch.

Jimbo's Big Night Out has been banned from several locations around this great red land of ours for being too severe when it comes to language and content. So once again, this is not a show for those who get easily offended. Audience participation is a must!



Joanne Brookfield: Princess Pissy Pants, The Greedy Cheese Eating Bitch and Other Naughty Dog Tales

In what has to have the longest title in this year's Festival, Joanne Brookfield has a show all about dogs. Well, in particular her long-time companion Murphy, who was with her for 12 years. Recounting stories about her and her beloved dog, Brookfield has some entertaining stories to tell in a rather standard style.

Brookfield has clearly mastered her comedic capacity, with her mannerisms tailored to suit the audience, but this show has clearly been created to tug at the heart strings, and that's really not enough make it funny. Rather than rely on her audience to come ready and prepared, she needs to work on the actual material and tighten the show.

Whilst you can easily see the dog lovers in the audience as they nod and laugh inappropriately at the mere mention of doggie antics, you can also hear the silence from the rest of us. This show appeals directly to a pre-existing condition, and fails to sway the remainder.



Jo Randerson's Skazzle Dazzle

Jo Randerson's Skazzle Dazzle is an... experience. If your idea of 'funny' is famous guys with Scottish accents telling dick jokes, *Skazzle Dazzle* probably isn't the show for you. However, if you like weird shit—like watching a woman on the verge of psychosis express herself through ribbon dance—you just might love it. The premise of *Skazzle Dazzle* ('an ancient alien abandons her prodigy on planet earth as an experiment') doesn't really connect to the rest of the show; it's more like an excuse for Randerson to wear a silly alien costume, then launch into a series of unforgettable character based routines.

While there is no real plot, there is nautical flag-waving ('Do you guys know sophomore?'), satirical militarism, an incongruous priest who might've been in the first draft of *Waiting For Godot*, existential puppetry, and enough visual gags and bad jokes for half a dozen crappy shows.

All of Randerson's characters are losers, who fail in their various attempts to entertain the crowd. This is not always funny—in fact, sometimes it's downright painful to watch. But I can't help thinking that this is the point. *Skazzle Dazzle* is a funny show about failing to be funny; an absurdist meta-comedy that makes you question your desire to laugh in the first place.

While many of the routines in *Skazzle Dazzle* feel like brilliant ideas that need more workshoping—more polishing—this lack of polish also makes Randerson's show unique, courageous and haunting. I reckon Samuel Beckett would approve.



The Kransky Sisters Heard it on the Wireless

As you look through the Festival guide, if you come across the faces of three middle-age women staring intensely at you, it is probably The Kransky Sisters. Their unique and brilliant new show *Heard it on the Wireless* is a series of comical moments created by three talented actresses who work together to paint the lives of three very different and hilarious sisters. As the oldest sister narrates stories from their lives, the tales are punctuated by intermittent bursts of music played on keyboard, kitchenware and a tuba.

The varied personalities of the sisters are what make the show shine. The oldest is stoic and staunchly represses the other two sisters with hilarious fear tactics. The second sister follows obediently but reveals glimpses of a deep yearning for sexual contact—one of the funniest moments came when the sisters get a man from the audience up on stage to help them perform, and afterwards, when he kissed the second sister on the cheek, she responded by shaking and smiling uncontrollably. Finally the third sister is a simpleton who secretly steals moments of guilty pleasure by watching 'Big Brother' when the other two are not around.

If you are looking for a show with expertly crafted characters as well as sharp one-liners, The Kransky Sisters are not to be missed!



Kung Fu DaPu Sewerperhero

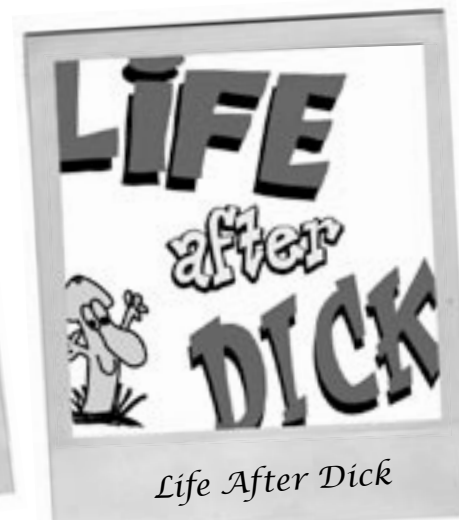
Kids love poo jokes. Hell, so do I. Luckily, this show is full of them.

Kung Fu DaPu (pronounced DuPWA of course) is a modern day sewerperhero who lives within the bowels (sorry) of Melbourne's sewerage system. DaPu and his sidekick, Number One, seek to educate the world about water sustainability, while battling their evil nemesis, a giant cotton tip with a French accent and anger management issues.

Brought to us by Melbourne Water, the show uses puppetry, hip hop and lots of puns to deliver its message. Unfortunately, I wasn't convinced that the message quite reached its mark. I know kids have much greater understanding of subtlety than the media gives them credit for, but for a show produced with environmental themes in mind, it didn't seem quite blatant enough. We were told repeatedly that 'It doesn't go in the loo unless it goes through you,' but we could have learnt a lot more about the consequences of putting the wrong thing down the dunny.

I would have liked to see more kids invited onstage, too. The audience participation was extremely orchestrated—three people were chosen before the show and given short scripts to read from. But they were all grown ups not the target audience!

That said, the target audience of very short human beings seemed to enjoy themselves, joining in with the songs and laughing at the silly bits. It's a good show and free, but it needs some tweaking before it will be really good.

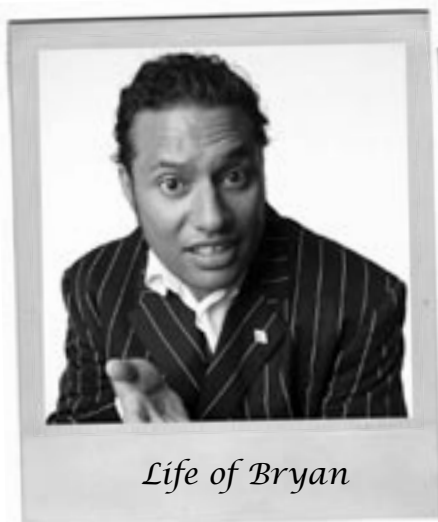


Life After Dick

Billed as the 'ultimate Girls Night Out' the show starts with a male stripper. Don't let that put you off. The lame antics of the exotic dancer are no match for the comedy that follows but merely instils a bawdy, hen's night atmosphere. As former 'fluffers' for *Puppetry of the Penis* these three comedienne have teamed up again, delivering the female equivalent of 'blokey' humour and surprisingly, given the title, there were very few dick jokes.

Em O'Loughlin kicked off in uncertain style. She had some strong material but her delivery was forced and awkward. She could take some tips from Bev Killick who was surely the most popular of the night. Effortlessly gliding over fart jokes, blow job stories, and unashamedly exploring weight and beauty issues before topping it all off with a few songs, Bev managed to keep the pace cracking and the audience cracking up. Raw, rude and outrageous, Killick is definitely a star on the rise.

Jackie Loeb had the unfortunate task of following the crowd-pleasing Killick with her own brand of musical comedy. She was less predictable and a little nasty but more exciting because of it. Her striptease was confronting and hilarious, and her routine had the kind of frisson you get from not knowing how far she will go and who might get hurt in the process. Fantastic, daring and devastatingly funny, this performance topped off a great girls (and boys) night out.



Life of Bryan

Take a Samoan-Kiwi-Australian former priest currently working as a nightclub bouncer by night and call centre consultant by day, put him on stage doing his first night of stand-up, throw in an opera singing cousin and a dancing niece, and you've pretty much got *Life of Bryan*—not to be confused with the Monty Python film.

There were a lot of first night jitters, but Bryan grew in confidence as the night progressed and the crowd embraced his self-effacing style. There were plenty of family and friends in the audience so the night was a strange mix of confession and in-jokes, but it made for a warm and intimate atmosphere.

Of course the migrant experience featured heavily, and Bryan flitted easily from Samoan to Kiwi to Aussie to 'playing white man' as a missionary in Papua New Guinea, finding the best laughs and moving on. His wealth of life experience made for rich pickings and he capitalised well on the many stages of his personal journey.

There were awkward moments—it was his debut after all—and some of the jokes about women were definitely cringe-worthy, but the crowd was with him all the way and the laughs kept coming. *Life of Bryan* is a brilliant debut for a talented newcomer.



Laughapoolooza 2006

It's late at night, it's maybe a little bit rainy, and there's a distinct desire not to go home and finish the lovely evening you're having out enjoying the Comedy Festival. So, what do you do? You go to *Laughapoolooza* is what. It's the perfect musical endnote to a night of happiness.

The big tent by the river is a beacon to the bright-eyed and a siren calling to the homeward-bound (Death by laughter is the implication.). On the night I went, Chopper (from TV's 'Ronnie Johns Half Hour') had the tent filled with raucous laughter and set everyone at ease with his hard biting informality. He was joined by *The Renegades of Folk*, Josh Earl, Tom Gleeson and *Tripod*.

The type of musical comedy on offer at *Laughapalooza* seems to have undergone a bit of a reformation in recent times. It's gone from being a parodied little cousin of the mainstream comedian to a featured self-assured member of the performance circuit. Performers consistently pull big crowds at big venues and sell out their shows to the solid fan base they've built up over the years.

Laughapoolooza gives artists and audiences a chance to wind-down and take things a little easy at the end of the night. It's the place for moments like Tom Gleeson and *Tripod* interacting with each other's sets willy-nilly, and the *Renegades of Folk*'s impromptu take on fringe acts. It has the feel of a show put on by performers who just want to keep playing.



The Lion, the Bitch and the Closet

The Lion, the Bitch and the Closet are, in fact, three separate acts in this darkly funny triple treat.

Jeremy Lion is the first of two acts from Edinburgh, playing a washed up 'children's performer' who bumbles and belches his way through a story time play. As he gets progressively drunker, Jeremy and his pianist, Lesley, stuff up their lines, break props and generally make a dirty mess of things. If you can judge a performer by their ability to deal with some hideously obnoxious hecklers, then Jeremy is a pro—'If this was a DVD I'd appreciate a commentary, but I think I speak for a certain group when I say shut the fuck up.' The crowd went wild.

Melbourne's own Christine Basil is the bitch, insofar as it's a bitch to listen to her go over the same material she's been working for years. Nevermind (as the next act would say)—she's an adequate MC for the evening despite her inexplicable changes of clothing.

Finally, leaping out of the closet are Topping and Butch, also from Edinburgh, clad in red leather bondage gear and ready to whip us with their politically charged and cheeky show. This was the first time during the Festival that my face hurt from laughing, and their engagement with local and up to date current affairs, where other internationals would stick with global topics, was extremely impressive. The duo took the evening's general theme of naughtiness to a new level. A great show, delightfully wicked.



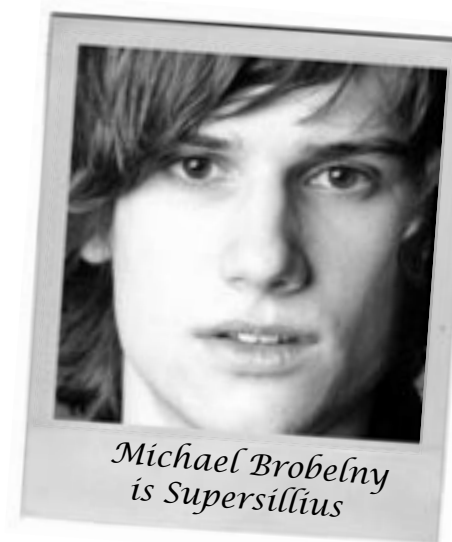
Man Bites God Choking Hazard

Inadvertently funny and deliberately offensive, this Melbourne based trio is the alternative punter's Tripod. Don't be fooled by their clean-cut appearance—*Man Bite God* are filthy musicians masquerading as melodious nice boys. They put the 'blue' in the Blues and triple-handedly turn delightful music into delinquent muck. But it works. It's giggle-worthy for loyal and virgin punters alike. As a first time viewer, I was quietly impressed by their vocal talent and musical versatility.

Each member of *Man Bites God* takes a solo turn, and the instrument of choice ranges from a comical slide whistle to an Indian bongo set. They also run the gamut of musical genres, teaming highly suspect lyrics with pop rock and gospel blues. Imagine an ode to beer sung a cappella style, or a love ballad that opens with the romantic words: 'She was lubricated...'

It's an entertaining set with lollipop ladies being reduced to alcoholic whores and ex-girlfriends being punched in the face. Watch frontman and funnyman James confuse his stage for a soapbox, dragging cricket and punk into a show that has no room for the verbal rant of one. Then watch him fluff his marketing pitch and tell you he has 'CDs and stiff' for sale after the show. It's all grin-worthy.

Performing under red wash at Pony—an intimate, upstairs bar that feels more like a basement under construction, *Man Bites God* are worth a look.



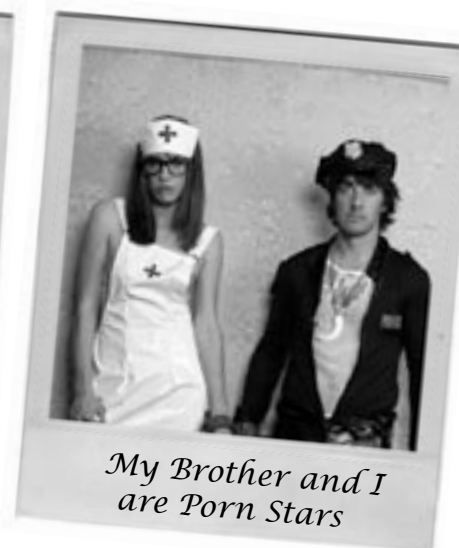
Michael Grobelny is Supersillius

The title lends itself well to the routine Michal Grobelny has prepared. With no jokes, no punchlines, and a lot of circular meandering on a small stage, I was left feeling dizzy and confused, unsure whether I was *Waiting for Godot* at drama school or had involuntarily beached myself on the Island of Postmodern Microphone Stand Shamanism.

It was a self-confessed atrocity of error—with the added misfortune of a reviewer and two filming documentary-makers in the audience. Grobelny's quip regarding two girls who didn't laugh as they sat in paying attendance at his gig the night before—the ones he therefore told to 'Fuck off back where they came from'—probably didn't encourage any further sympathy from his captive audience.

A hard venue to create a fuzzy love-in-and-let's-laugh atmosphere, the upstairs room at Pony is somewhat cold and unforgiving as a comedic site. Such conditions surely present an added challenge and anxiety for any comedian performing there, and as a reviewer this must be taken into account. (A growing congregation of leather-clad punk-rockers on ground level, impatiently awaiting their sound check as the comedy show ran overtime, greeted all in attendance upon our prompt departure from the venue. I hope you made it out alive, Michal.)

Redeeming potential exists however for a strong and powerful routine based on Grobelny's intelligent use of black, sideways thinking, and stream of consciousness delivery. We shall look forward to his improvement next year.



My Brother and I are Porn Stars

Having announced that they have been sent downstairs while their porn star parents are working, Jackie (Jackie Van Beek) and Jon (Jonathan Brugh) launch into a comedy that ridicules societal norms.

From their initial decision to produce incestuous pornography to pay for breakfast to the revelation of Jon's singing penis, this show gets most of its value from the sheer outrageousness of its content. The show's sacrilegious representation of Christianity is entirely in bad taste but hilarious and promises a prolonged audience reaction of disgusted amusement. This softens however as the show progresses, the style becoming noticeably more surreal and the comedy darker; there seems to be some deeper meaning underlying the action.

I wondered at the relative sobriety of these later scenes, perhaps advocating desire free from social expectations. Although, any clear message is obscured by Jon's apology for 'drinking' Jackie's baby and other ridiculous scenarios. It seems that the purpose behind the show is undecided or perhaps purposefully non-committal, causing the disparity in style between the beginning and end.

The set is minimal and ornamented with blow-up dolls and a bed, accommodating for the non-naturalistic scene changes quite well, which the actors make full use of. Brugh, in particular, slips seamlessly from character to character whilst on stage, most notably between Jon and his genitals. Van Beek also puts in a good performance, her childish voice making the vulgar phrases slipping from her mouth all the more hilarious.



The Nice Guys in You Say Potato, I Say Die

The humble spud is rarely associated with outbursts of unchecked aggression, segues into song and dance, and haphazard pop cultural references—and it's this unique enmeshment of randomness which embodies the madcap hilarity in *You Say Potato, I Say Die!*

Members of a sell out University of New South Wales Law Revue, the Nice Guys are a four man plus one horse outfit, which embraces madness, satirises corporate skulduggery, and revels in its creation of a nonsensical and surrealist narrative. The Nice Guys derive much delight in showcasing their verbal dexterity (That is to say they are remarkably verbose.)—and their comic virtuosity is best illustrated by their attempts at cerebral humour. Like the majority of university students, they possess a love for acting inappropriately, taking the piss out of everything (Nothing is sacred.), and generally relishing their time under the bright lights. Raucous laughter erupted from the audience (largely comprised of university undergraduates) as severe attacks were aimed at the once revered sport of interscholastic debating; and the English nerds would have had a field day with the Nice Guys' wilful destruction of the English language, throwing caution, syntax and prose out the window. Rebellious and unapologetically immature at times, the Nice Guys spit in the face of convention, and do a very good job of providing off-the-wall entertainment.

You Say Potato, I Say Die! is a show of anarchic proportions, steered by four punks with a promising future in comedy.

Gillian Terzis



Pastor Michael Brings Manna From Heaven

Pastor Michael clearly watches a lot of late night cable channels. He has the manner of a sleazy Dixieland preacher and the knack of making a low budget infomercial down to a fine art. Unfortunately, the show doesn't go far beyond these one-dimensional parodies. Michael makes good use of his timeslot, by screening self-promoting commercials, performing 'miracles' and involving the audience in saccharine singalongs (The last of which is particularly good.). His use of merchandise is another clever feature.

However, most of Pastor Michael's jokes revolve around a fairly adolescent play on the concept of spreading the 'seed' of Christianity. The show touched on political issues such as detention centres, John Howard's adulation of the United States and the role of religion as 'the opiate of the masses'. It would have been great to see these ideas developed into a cohesive and acerbic commentary but they were raised then strangely forgotten.

One factor that lets the performer down is his decision to use a Southern accent. While appropriate to the genre, the accent was awkward and caused Michael to stumble over his lines, which was off-putting and broke the spell of the act. He has also adopted the mannerism of prancing energetically on stage while delivering his lines. Again, this may have mimicked a particular preaching style but was overdone and distracting—a question of nerves perhaps.

Pastor Michael brings Manna from Heaven has all the makings of a biting satire but falls disappointingly short.

Alison Duggan



*Pauly Shore
The King of Dumb-ass Comedy*

The Weasel arrives in Melbourne. Kick back to the early nineties, put on a tie-dyed shirt and start squeezing the ju-ice.

Shore has the ultimate history in stand-up comedy; his father was comedian Sammy Shore, and his mother Mitzi owned the world famous Comedy Club in Los Angeles. Literally from birth, Shore was surrounded by the crème de la crème of comedic performers, and it seems that at least some of this has rubbed off on him after 30 years.

His style of comedy can only be described as offensive. Really offensive. It's clear that Shore is open to any topic, regardless of taboo. From his in-depth instructional section on giving a good blow job to his rather candid opinions on child porn, Shore is a master at shock tactics, disgusting his audience whilst simultaneously keeping them on the edge of their seats.

For someone who has fallen from the height of popularity within Generation Y, Shore has a great humility and understanding of his position. Quick to take a self-reflexive stab at his former career, he uses his accomplishments and failures to his advantage, with some great material and an absolutely first-rate performance.

With great delivery, offensive substance with slightly too much emphasis on sex, Shore entertains like a creepy uncle that goes too far. You want to laugh at him, but you're also worried about what that makes you.

Tim Norton



Polycomic

Polycomic's offer of three comedians for the price of one is a bargain that would make Dimmeys proud. Not two, but three likely lads make up a local laughter deal that simply won't last. Just like a factory direct outlet, *Polycomic* is cheap, and although it contains lots of outdated fashion, there are still hot items to be found.

Direct from his day job at a paint store, Ian Messig plays MC to Cameron Marshall and Karl Chandler in a tiny theatre at Loop bar. The show is very DIY, as the comedians also double as ticket collectors and ushers. It's not the best comedy choice if you're into dazzling colours and theme music—it's more of a raw white light, blank backdrop, casual clothes affair.

Although this is amateur comedy, all three comedians avoided (for the most part) sinking to the cheap smut genre made popular by Elephant and Wheelbarrow-style jokesters. Marshall favoured a kind of gag-punchline observational humour, which drew from popular culture. Chandler played up the role of the downtrodden storyteller but has not quite perfected an illusion of sympathy-inspiring insecurity, occasionally portraying the real thing instead. Messig is to be applauded for sheer nerve—he sings joke lyrics to Sinatra's 'Chicago' completely a capella.

All three of these dollar dazzlers have some strong material, but their delivery is often not powerful enough to induce the laughter they deserve. Just like Easter eggs, these guys are on special. Check them out if you're into inexpensive local laughs.

Brianna Summers



*Sam Simmons's
Tales from the Erotic Cat*

Get a kick out of illogical humour? Come to Sam Simmons' show. It's a one-man tribute to all things absurd, from dramatic cans of tuna to stuffed, talking seagulls. There's no point trying to connect the dots—it's a bizarre, non-sequential joyride through the mind of a man who talks to a ficus—a what? Exactly! It's not supposed to make sense, and the more you try to apply logic, the further you will find yourself from the laughter frontier.

Sam Simmons is all about quirky. He comes to a Pavarotti-style crescendo over chutney and presents nursery rhymes in a fashion your mother would be ashamed of. The Regent Room is an intimate venue, so the confidence that Simmons exudes bounces straight off the stage and lands unexpectedly in your lap. It all feels rather upfront, no matter how far back you're sitting.

Directed by Alan Brough, this show is tailored to a specific kind of audience—the eccentric kind. You need to appreciate oddball comedy and embrace the notion of nonsense. Being of a sound and logical mind, I found this quite difficult; however, I was in the minority. The erotic moggy referenced in the title is both hilarious and disturbing. It's just one of many kooky characters played convincingly by Simmons throughout the show.

If you're looking for something different and disarming, this is the gig for you. Leave your logic at the door and laugh yourself loopy.

Bex Lee



*Seven True Stories
and One Massive Lie*

The comic material for Evan Jones' show writes itself, as the man's life is so full of bizarre shit that he need only relay it to an audience to achieve stand-up success. Jones' real-life experiences, festooned with oddities and hilarity as they are, no doubt fuelled the creative presentation of his show. His performance is an interactive game, where he tells eight tall tales and the audience is encouraged to guess which is a massive lie. As the show progresses, he records the crowd's speculation on a faux blackboard with liquid chalk (a nice touch).

Jones is a pleasure to watch—he is refreshingly confident for a small-time comedian and is a likeable character with natural storytelling ability. There's something a little bit Tony Martin-esque about his delivery, and the show's vibe is similar to that of a slightly boozed share house chat involving a talented thespian and his housemates.

Most of the show is planned, yet Jones demonstrates his ability to improvise as he deals with both solicited and uninvited audience participation. Although his show was criminally unattended the night *The Pun* attended, all 12 of us were splitting our sides laughing. Even the drunken lout who was providing nonsensical (yet luckily non-threatening) commentary had a great time.

It is definitely worth braving the cold and the divey Exford Hotel for *Seven True Stories and One Massive Lie*. Jones is a genuinely funny comic—not at all cheesy, hammy or similar to any other kind of deli produce whatsoever.

Brianna Summers



Etymologically speaking, the word 'smorgasbord' is a back-formation of the word 'Smorgy's', which is used to describe all-you-can-eat buffet-style restaurants. By extension, *Smorgasbord* is a buffet-style comedy show, serving up a selection of skits, stand-up, films and songs from behind the sneeze guard. Unfortunately, like the food at Smorgy's, the comedy at *Smorgasbord* is somewhat lacking in nutritional value.

The main problem is the delivery. Lead comedian Dave Ryan needs to bone up on his vocal skills, and his sidekick Diane Armstrong sounded terribly over-rehearsed and stilted. The show made use of an AV projector, which was left on 'pause' during the live action, filling the room with a low-pitched hum at all times. Some of the parodies were a bit outdated or obscure, and Armstrong's jokes became quite gross towards the end. All up, I got the feeling that Ryan and Armstrong had gotten a bit ahead of themselves and put on a show before they were really ready.

Which is a shame because there was some promising material in there that would have fared better in more experienced hands. Some of the filmed sketches were quite amusing, albeit with terrible production values—muffled sound and bad camera angles. With Melbourne overflowing with film students, surely they could have found someone with the right equipment and technical skills? It got me wondering, if perhaps the folks at Jim's Comedians might be better off concentrating on writing comedy and franchise out the performing to someone else.

Chloe Walker



Becoming a fan of Sammy J is exhausting. Like some sort of keyboard-wielding Pied Piper, J compels many of his fans, using his charm and charisma, to travel the length and breadth of the nation just to watch him perform. (I saw one particularly fanatical groupie at almost every show.).

Although Australia is the world's smallest continent, it is fairly sparsely populated, which can make travelling between major capital cities a particularly gruelling process when you have an almost pathological inability to catch a plane. But it can make for a very entertaining Comedy Festival show.

Nestled under Duckboard House, J bounces around on stage in what must be one of the smallest festival venues, in his well written, high energy *55 Minute National Tour*. Accompanied by some very funny video material, which fills in the travel time storyline as he wings his way from Brisbane to Perth and places in between, J performs a collection of catchy tunes on his keyboard and delivers some biting political comedy to each of his audiences. (It was interesting to discover that Adelaide still rates as a destination on a national tour.).

J's performance as the smooth, garish cabaret performer was hilarious; although, at times his slick keyboard playing overshadowed his brief attempts at straight stand-up, and occasionally made his song lyrics difficult to understand. With that said, I doubt you could find anyone in the audience who wasn't glad they came on this Contiki Tour of Comedy.

Alex Murray



There is nothing better in Australian comedy than a few cheap shots about Adelaide, and this show masters the art of good old-fashioned Australian humour and the ability to laugh at oneself.

Expect the mandatory gags about drugs (of any sort), murderers, how Melbourne stole the Grand Prix, and the inherent boredom of living in the city of churches and the resulting strange things the locals feel compelled to do.

Boasting a varying line-up of Adelaide comedians, many of whom have made the trek to the Melbourne International Comedy Festival for the very first time, this show guarantees diversity in both style and humour.

Craig Egan gives a punchy performance as MC, and Jarrod Fisch is a definite highlight. Combining natural ease with a confident routine, Fisch steals the show. Particularly fervent is his languid, tender ode to his childhood babysitter's inappropriate sexual advances.

With the last few shows this coming weekend, and a promised supplemented line-up of various Adelaide comedians currently performing in the Festival, *Something In The Water* is worth dropping in on.

Bianca Durrant



Fans of SBS's *Pizza* will be familiar with Tahir Bilgic who plays Habib on the cult program. Tahir's Turkish background gives him a different angle on the comedy scene, and I hoped that *Live and Circumcised* would offer a fresh perspective on 'ethnic' humour, particularly as the genre seemingly peaked in the '80s and early '90s with the work of Nick Giannopoulos, Mary Coustas and the like.

The evening began with former Giannopoulos cohort Simon Palomares. He skillfully worked the room, showing how laughing at people's differences could unite them, regardless of background. This gave his routine relevance and depth. It's a shame then that the same could not be said for the main attraction.

Tahir entered to an enthusiastic response. It's clear he has many fans and an unstructured act that relied heavily on audience participation. This could have worked if Tahir possessed the wit or likeability to playfully engage with his audience, but sadly he did not. The night's low point came when he stormed into the audience and rather aggressively interacted with a nine-year-old boy, leading one punter to accuse him of bullying.

Tahir retreated back on stage and attempted some jokes. These too often fell flat. His observation that the recent trials of Schappelle Corby and Michelle Leslie received such abundant media coverage because, 'They're hot,' was hardly revealing.

He may be funny on *Pizza*, but on this occasion, Tahir failed to deliver.

Mike Katsieris



Risotto Sans Frontieres or 'Risotto Without Borders' is an interesting show. Tanya Losanno has managed to piece together a series of anecdotes drawn from life experience with a selection of serious content relating to the duality of celebrities endorsing noble causes.

That being said, I don't think I'm her target audience even though Tanya and I share similar upbringings (growing up in Australia with strong ties to an Italian heritage) because the stories were all too familiar to somebody like me and failed to hit the mark. Tanya does, however, manage to connect with her audience quite well using iconic childhood memories such as the canned food drives we all endured at Primary School.

Her use of Italian-Australian stereotypes is a bit tired, but her own personal slant and how she manages to tie it all in with risotto is a nice touch. There is an air of sincerity about her show that is refreshing to see at a Festival loaded with acts that are too sure of themselves; Tanya exudes a self-awareness that is appropriate for the material she presents to her audience. Though, at times, her delivery starts off casual and low-key and then shifts to a drawn-out emphatic statement for her key phrases or words in a somewhat-similar style to Judith Lucy.

I recommend seeing Tanya Losanno as a local talent who if given the right amount of attention and direction, could develop into a popular grassroots comedian, there's a heap of potential here—plus you'll get a cool sticker.

Paul D'Agostino



'Thank God It's Funny! Thank God It's Friday! Thank God It's The Festival!'—and that's exactly what it is: funny, Friday and the Festival. *TGIF* is a great show that gives new and upcoming comedians a chance to showcase the best of their talent in a five to ten minute space and the audience a peek at what they would see if they were to see the actual show. *TGIF* reminded me of a night of taste testing.

TGIF is upstairs at Tonik, a funky, cosy bar located in a quiet street in Kensington where you can definitely enjoy your night. The laid-back attitude was awesome, and the couches at the front of the room give off a comfortable feel. The set-up of the show was great, encouraging the audience to relax and take it easy.

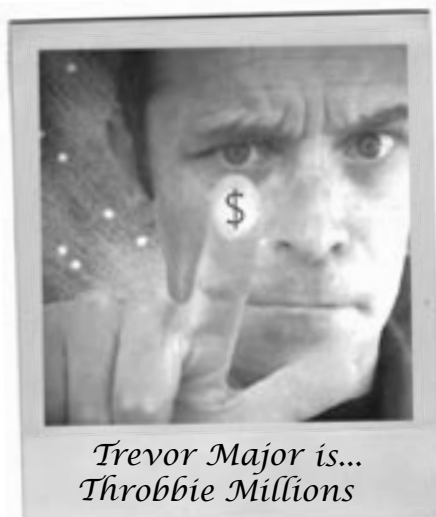
The MC of the night Lach Ryan provides a light, funny interlude between the acts, bringing his own humour to the night.

Lou Pardi was the first comedian up, picking up on current world events. Pardi is in a show with Jacky Claff called Fran and Roxanne are Best Friends, which looks as if it could be worth catching based on her set.

Dave Thornton was another great comedian. He entertained us with his everyday humour, but what brought down the house was his Hughesy impersonation.

TGIF was a great laugh all round.

Ashlee Cain



*Trevor Major is...
Throbbie Millions*

What I'll loosely term 'humour' in *Trevor Major is...Throbbie Millions* is largely derived from the Throbbie Millions character (a cunningly disguised parody of the real Robbie Williams) being an up-himself talentless shit. Technically, it uses the time-honoured tradition of turning pop songs into parodies by turning keywords and phrases into scatological and sexual references, with a wee bit of mocking the disabled. Because everyone knows epilepsy is comedy gold.

The idea of a show based entirely on a Robbie Williams parody runs into trouble almost immediately. The inexplicable Mr. Williams has already diverted so much effort into self-parody that after seeing *Trevor Major is...Throbbie Millions* I'd decided it would be far funnier to see the man himself. Possibly sleeping.

Throbbie Millions is rather like the kind of show I'd expect on a P&O cruise: single entendre comedy about the hilarious capacity of the word 'come' to sound rude. Sorry, the nauseating capacity. The almost full house apparently composed of package tour bogans only added to the sense of dread—when the heckling reaches the standard of 'What colour are my wife's undies?' it's class all the way, people. Poorly angled projected video and mistimed lighting cues only highlighted the sense of being trapped in a horrible Over-28s cruise to Ibiza, where you'd be trapped with them all again.



*V.I.P.: Lies, Non-sense
and Celebrity Chefs*

Vanity, Insanity, Profanity (V.I.P) has proved to be one of the surprise acts of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. Although they could be compared to Tripod or DAAS because of their cabaret style, the similarities end there.

The trio—Naomi, Paul and Simon—uses their alter egos 'Vanity', 'Insanity', 'Profanity' to launch into songs and jokes pertaining to each one. 'Vanity' swoons over his own appearance, heckling women in the audience and insisting that they want to date him, and 'Profanity' shouts abuse at 'Insanity' and physically threaten him. This occurs while 'Insanity' sings about his imaginary friend and makes light of a host of mental illnesses. But it is the role play punctuating the songs that adds a twist to the act.

V.I.P.'s material builds on society's fascination with popular culture and then knocks it down at a rapid rate through sharp wit and political incorrectness, which engages the audience in blink-or-you'll-miss-it style moments.

The hour long show offers commentary on why mobile phones and alcohol don't mix and the uselessness of pretty boy celebrity chefs and even the ridiculous rival of actor David Hasselhoff.

Lies, Non-Sense and Celebrity Chefs is truly a different act in the world of musical comedy. Its success should help the trio become V.I.P.s in their genre.

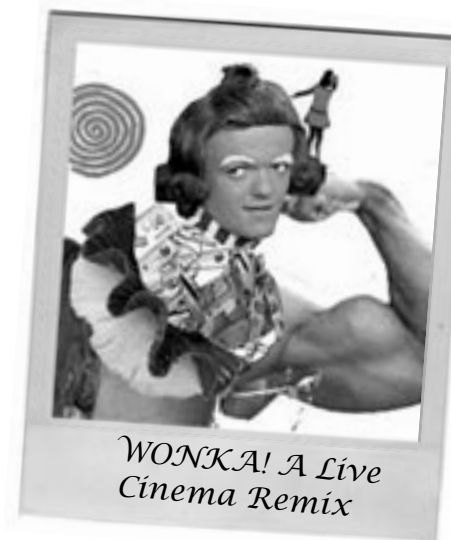


*Wes Snelling
In Record Time*

Forget Mariah Carey, forget J-Lo—Wes Snelling is the new modern day diva. He has the walk, the look and, most importantly, the attitude. Of course, one would hope that it's all played up for laughs on stage, especially considering his poor, ever suffering assistant Steven Weir who bares the brunt of most of Snelling's bile and self inflated ego. But that's what this show is all about: watching Wes strut and sing in an attempt to record a live version of his soon-to-be hit single, with Steven accompanying him on guitar.

The show included a couple of songs that showcased Snelling's singing talent and proved that he really could belt out a tune, but most of the set comprised of Wes and Steven trying to work out the best way to play their 'hit single'. Should it be funky? More Sinatra-esque? Or a little Robbie Williams? This is where the comedy comes in. The interplay between the two musicians was fantastic to watch, as Steven was forced to stop playing over and over again to incorporate every whim that entered Snelling's head, no matter how ridiculous. The two have great chemistry on stage, and that's a good thing; for without it, this show wouldn't work.

I strongly recommend this show to anyone after an inventive concept and a lot of good laughs.



*WONKA! A Live
Cinema Remix*

Did you know that the master tapes, with precious sound, music and voice recordings, of the original Willy Wonka and The Chocolate Factory mysteriously disappeared just before the film's release in the '70s? The whole film had to be rewritten and dubbed around that silly Roald Dahl book.

Luckily, the people behind *Wonka!* found the masters and interpreted them into their own hilarious show. It is the original film onscreen with live voice-over, sound effects and music. It's a bit confusing at first, but don't look towards the group of performers at front—they are just components of your home theatre set up. Rather, sit back in the comfortable chairs, watch the screen and go on a magical trip.

The *Wonka!* ride takes in zombies, alcoholic candy shop owners, Grandpa's obsession with Batman, Charlie's love of chimneys and his dangerous drug habit...and that's just in the first ten minutes.

The voice-overs are on the money. When Willy Wonka opens his mouth to speak onscreen, the live voice is completely in sync, spitting out Wonka's demented lines about Oompa Loompas or abusing his guests. It is both surreal and brilliant to watch. The scene hooking-up Beastie Boys rhymes must have taken forever to get right, and it is worth the ticket price alone.

My only gripe with *Wonka!* is that it is too funny. As I recovered from laughing fits, I kept missing the next five jokes. Take the trip to *Wonka!*



Yianni in Yianni's Head

In the tradition of the well-known US sitcom 'Herman's Head', Yianni plays the roles of the four dominant voices in his head: love, logic, fear and libido (the latter bizarrely yet somehow aptly named 'Pierre'). He narrates their journey through a relationship (spotting, meeting, relationship, breaking up), jumping in and out of character as required.

Each voice has a different personality, and while each was distinct, the character development was better in some than others. It was no coincidence that 'Pierre', the hilarious Libido, was the only named voice, as he really took on a life of his own. However, this had the effect of highlighting the fact that the other voices lacked the same caricature quality. This, along with the use of PowerPoint, occasionally left me with the impression that I was sitting in a very funny business meeting.

The narration was painfully honest and funny, demonstrating that Yianni doesn't need to take on a character to be successful at stand-up. His organic, quirky humour puts the audience at ease.

That said, his four voices could provide him with a lifetime of stand-up material. With a little polish and bravado, *Yianni's Head* could be a long term crowd puller and a conversation starter for therapists everywhere.

Jonathon Rivett

GetUp!

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*For all the hard working ushers, attendants and cattle-movers of the Melbourne Town Hall who have stood out there every night and worked their butts off getting punters in to the right room at the right time to see their shows. This page is a tribute to you.
As suggested by one of your own, our logo has been turned upside down. No longer a rooster laughing to welcome to festival, he is a cock-up.
jpsunij jo und « Bunyeu